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# BHAVAN'S JOURNAL

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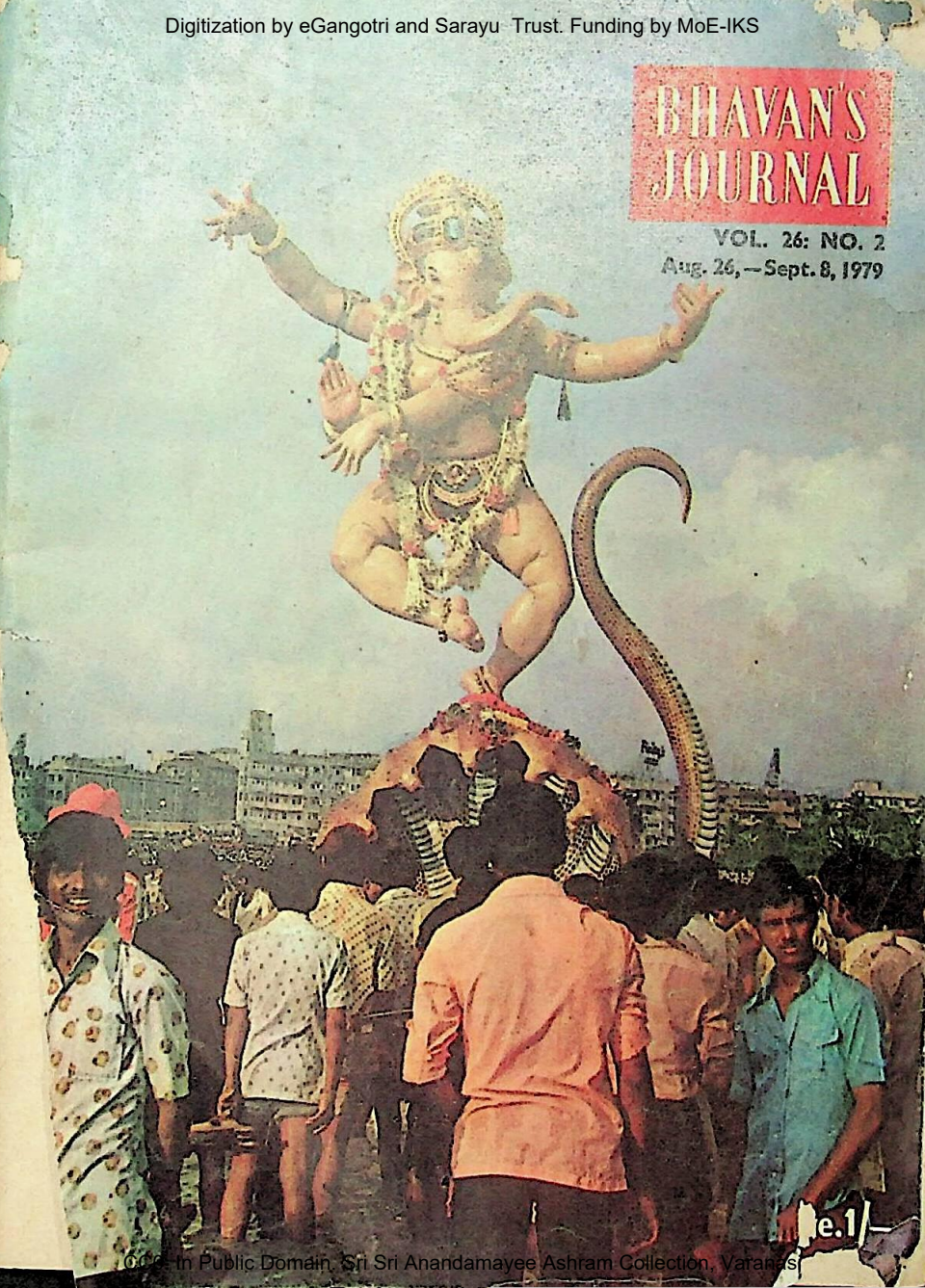
Aug. 26,—Sept. 8, 1979



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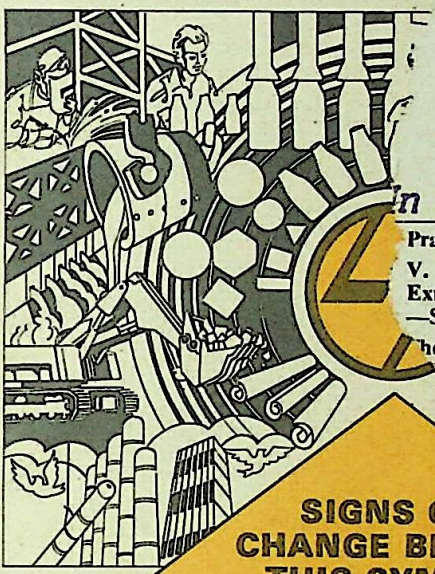

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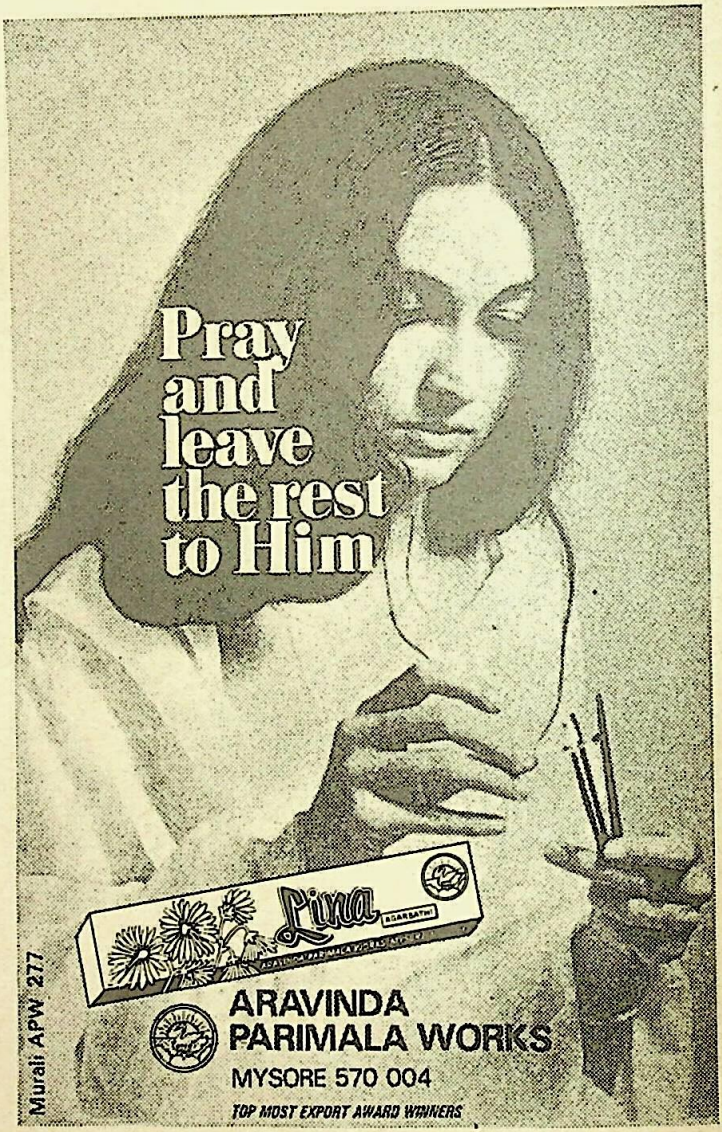


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आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतः

*Let noble thoughts come to us from every side*

Rigveda I-89-i

# PRAYER TO GANESA

गुणातीतमानं चिदानन्दरूपं
चिदाभासकं सर्वगं ज्ञानगम्यम्
मुनिध्येयमाकाशरूपं परेश
परब्रह्मरूपं गणेशं भजेम

—*Ganesastava*

Thy nature is beyond attributes. Thou art the embodiment of intelligence and bliss, the effulgent Spirit, the all-pervading, the goal of knowledge. Thou art the object of meditation to the sages, formless and omnipresent like ether. Thou art the supreme Lord, the supreme Brahman. To Thee, O Lord, do we offer our worship.

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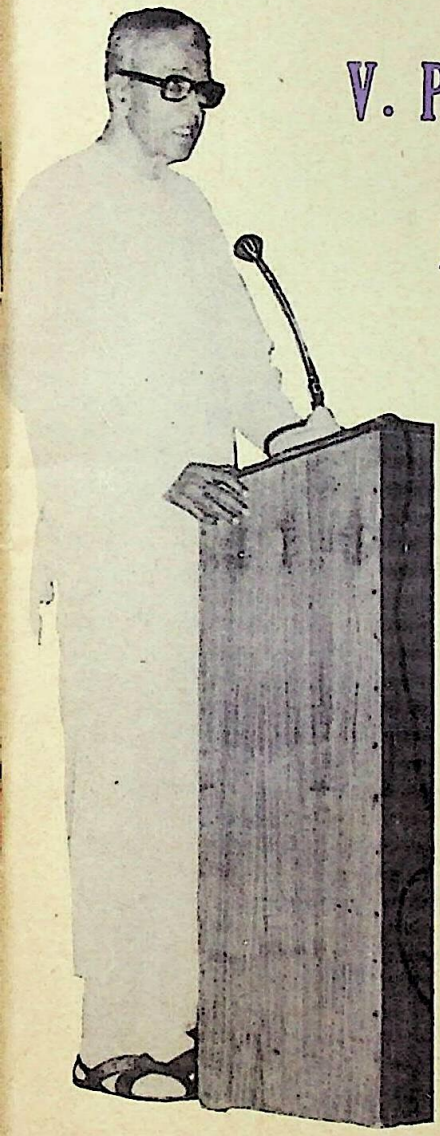

# V. PATTABHIRAMAN

## *Donor Extraordinary*

S. RAMAKRISHNAN

SHRI Venkatarama Aiyar Pattabhiraman—Pattu to his close friends—suddenly passed away of heart failure, in deep sleep on Friday, July 20, 1979, at the age of 68, at his residence "Ramasraya" in Nungambakkam High Road, Madras. The heartfelt condolences of the Bhavan's family to his revered old mother, Smt. Bhavani Ammal, his noble spouse, Smt. Savitri and other members of the family.

As was his wont, when Pattabhiramanji retired to bed at 10 p.m. that night, after disposing of all the papers pertaining to the projects designed for *janakalyan* which he had voluntarily taken upon himself, he was hale and hearty. The Almighty vouchsafed to this good samaritan the blessing of *anayasena maranam*.

Tall physically (6' 4"), Pattabhiramanji was also equally tall morally. He was a personality

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in his own right. Clad always unostentatiously, he was guileless and noble, selfless and self-effacing. Unpretentious, unassuming and disarmingly simple, he moved about unobtrusively and apologetically in this world of men and women always feverishly preoccupied with image-building, and in hot pursuit of power and pelf, fame and fortune.

Pattabhiramanji was one of the makers of modern Indian cricket. Lawyer, director of many firms and a great benefactor of public institutions like the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan and the Ramakrishna Mission, he was a symbol of clean living and high thinking, a God's good man. A passionate lover and a voracious reader of wholesome literature, he was a subscriber of the *Bhavan's Journal* right from its inception in 1954. He was also a regular buyer of the Bhavan's publications.

One of the architects and builders of the Bhavan's Madras Kendra, Pattabhiramanji first endowed it lavishly with property worth several lakhs—a beautiful five-acre plot of land with spacious buildings situate in serene, idyllic surroundings in Kilpauk—a prominent locality in Madras City. This was in 1972. In 1973, he gave a donation to the Bhavan for starting an Adhyatma Vidya Mandir. Again, in 1975, he gave a further donation to the Bhavan for instituting an annual H. H. Jagadguru Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Periaval Satabhishekam Memorial lectures in India and in England, and publishing them in book form. This lecture series has become an eagerly looked-forward-to event in the intellectual life of Madras.

Besides these specific donations, off and on he used to foot the bills for several items of expenditure incurred by the Madras Bhavan. Pattabhiramanji gave all these generous donations to the Bhavan and to many other institutions and individuals unasked, without any fanfare, without a trace of patronising air. Such givers are a very very rare species at all times, more so now-a-days. Verily, he was a *Nishkama Dani*.

Characteristically, Pattabhiramanji never liked anybody going to him and humouring him for parting with his wealth. He judiciously made his own selections. He gave spontaneously, after satisfying himself that the cause was worthy and the people behind it were honest and earnest.

The way he gifted his valuable Kilpauk property to the Bhavan was singularly unique. Now that Pattabhiramanji is not there to remonstrate, I would like to share with our dear readers the inside story. It reminded me of the qualities of the legendary Mahabharata hero Karna, the Magnanimous, whose left hand

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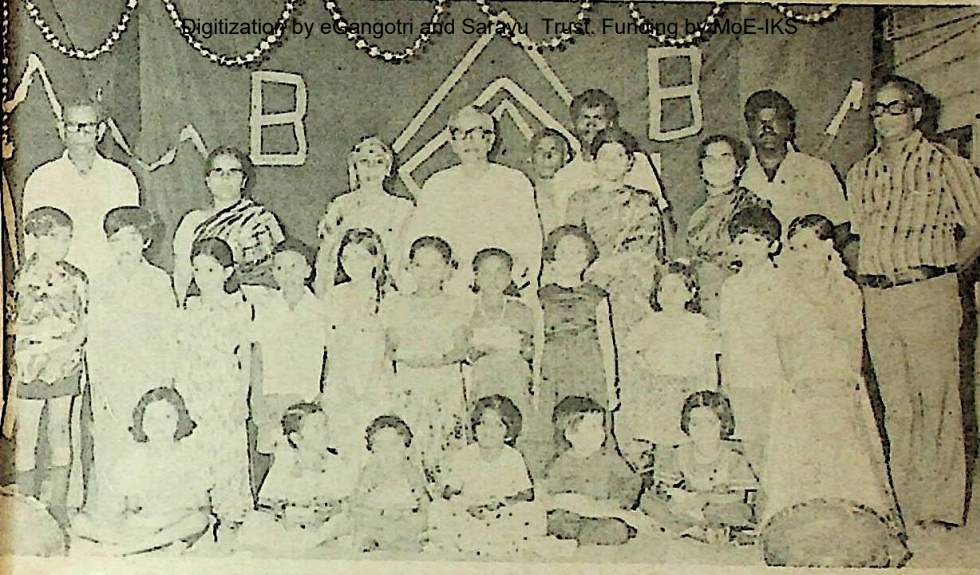

**Tiny tots always held a great fascination for the Pattabhiramans. Shri and Smt. Pattabhiraman are seen in this picture taken on the occasion of last year's annual day celebrations of the school started out of their munificence.**

did not know what his right hand gave.

It was a Thursday night in the year of grace 1972. The time was 9 p.m. The telephone rang. Our esteemed elder Shri T. V. Viswantha Aiyar, Vice-Chairman of the Bhavan's Madras Kendra, was on the line from Madras. In his typical, confident and leave-no-choice manner, he said:

"*Aseervadam.* Something big and good is in the offing. Why not come along?"

"*Mama,* may I know what is it all about?" I hesitatingly tried to cut in.

With paterfamiliastic air, he took no notice. "You know me, I know you," he continued and in his inimitably affectionate imperious manner, summoned me to Madras by the first available plane.

Accordingly, I took the next day's first flight to Madras, reaching there at about 8.30 a.m. I drove straightaway to Shri Viswanatha Aiyer's residence "Venkata Vilas" facing the holy Kapaleeswara-Karpakambal temple in Mylapore. Pattabhiramanji was already there. Shri Viswanatha Aiyer initiated the talk. Thereafter Pattabhiramanji explained in a few words the details of the property he intended to donate to the Bhavan. Thence he took me in his car to Kilpauk and showed me around the property. All this was through in less than an hour.

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I was simply enchanted by the vastness of the property, the greenery surrounding it and the serene atmosphere amidst the din and bustle of Madras city. I was also pleasantly surprised at the magnitude of this unsolicited gift and the manner of its offering. Typical of his self-abnegation, he reiterated that the donation was totally unconditional. I could hardly believe my ears. I could scarcely imagine such munificent donation fructifying so effortlessly and without any strings attached.

Let me now confess that it was not without some reservation that I had gone to Madras. Of course, after hearing Pattabhiramanji, all my doubts vanished like mist before the rising sun. Still, I wished to be doubly cautious. So, around 10.30 a.m. I phoned to the shrewd and sagacious Shrigopalji Nivetia (alas! he died in 1975), Honorary Secretary of the Bhavan for over quarter of a century, and very well-versed in such matters. I explained the proposition to him and requested him to fly to Madras by the mid-day flight. Though an exceedingly busy man, he always gave priority to the Bhavan's work. Keeping aside his other engagements for the day, he immediately left Bombay for Madras at this short notice of about two hours. I met him at the Meenambakkam Airport, from where we first went to Kilpauk where Pattabhiramanji affectionately received us. Thereafter, all the three of us motored down to Shri Viswanatha Aiyar's residence. The intelligent and hard-headed Shrigopalji was more than convinced of the genuineness of the offer. Letters were then and there exchanged, the whole transaction concluded and Shri Nevatia and myself flew back to Bombay the same day by the late evening flight. In the plane, he exclaimed that he had seldom come across such an egoless generous donor like Pattabhiramanji.

After a few days, I had to visit Delhi. Naturally one of the first things I reported to Shri Jaisukhlal Hathi, our Vice-President, who was in Delhi in those days, was the story of the genesis and culmination of this donation. I could not resist the temptation of appreciatively commenting on the spontaneity, speed and selflessness which characterised this act of Pattabhiramanji, making the recipient feel that by accepting the gift he would be conferring an obligation on the giver!

Hathiji, with his vast and varied experience of men and matters, remarked: "You may remember our talk in London while returning from Golder's Green to the Bhavan at New Oxford Street, after receiving the first of the donation of £ 12,500 for our U. K. Centre

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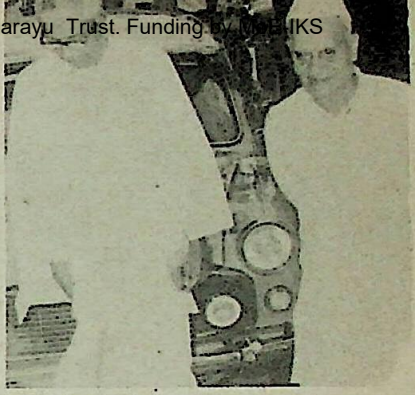
from Smt. Manibehn Megji Pethraj Shah."

He continued: "Donation to institutions is like life-sustaining water to individuals. Donors are of three types. One: like pumping water from a tube well—we have to apply grease and constant pressure; two: like drawing water from an open well—we have to get a bucket, tie it to a strong rope, slowly lower it and with some effort pull out; three: like taking water from a flowing holy river—we just dip a vessel and take as much water as we want. Pattabhiramanji belongs to the third category. God's blessings will always be with such *danadataas*."

Besides his own munificient contributions from time to time to the Bhavan, Pattabhiramanji had also helped the Bhavan in getting many donations, big and small, from his numerous friends. The first among them was a donation of Rs. 1 lakh from his co-Director, Shri D. C. Kothari. He thus not only himself lived the Bibilical dictum: "Life is to give but not to take," but also helped others to do likewise.

Numerous have been the occasions on which I had the good fortune of meeting Pattabhiramanji at his modest residence in Madras. Whenever I went to Madras, he used to thrust his car for my use and a meal with him was a must. Whenever he visited Bombay, he honoured me with a visit to my house. To me, he was like a loving and indulgent elder brother.



**Shri Pattabhiraman welcoming and conducting Tamil Nadu Governor Shri Prabhudas Patwari to preside over a function in Bhavan's Madras Kendra on June 9, 1979.**

One night during dinner in Bombay, Pattabhiramanji opened out his heart to me. He told me all about his great father, who was the first Indian Financial Controller of the Railways. He confided that he wanted to gift the funds in his family Trust for starting something out-of-the-ordinary and worthwhile in the Kilpauk Campus for the benefit of our younger generation. We considered various projects. He ultimately opted for a Day Residential School, harmoniously blending the best in the Eastern and the Western systems, where students would come by the school bus early morning, have their breakfast, lunch, evening tiffin and games, as also do their home work, getting back to their parents late in the evening.

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Thereby the students would derive all the benefits of an integrated Public School education without missing parental love and guidance.

Soon after he returned to Madras, he had a three-phased project report prepared, invited tenders for the essential repairs, alterations and renovation to the buildings and also for the necessary furniture and fixtures. Not only that, he also donated the whole amount for this purpose. Thus was born, in June 1976, Bhavan's Bhavani Ammal School in Madras, with Standard I to IV. Incidentally, it was with great difficulty that Pattabhiramanji could be persuaded to name the school after his venerable old mother, Smt. Bhavani Ammal.

In December 1978, it was given to the Bhavan to sponsor the Rajaji Centenary National Committee and be instrumental in organising the Centenary Celebrations of the "Conscience Keeper" of Mahatma Gandhi on a national, even international scale. One of the many programmes drawn up by the National Committee is to name institutions and landmarks after Rajaji.

During his last visit to Bombay in the first week of February 1979, he discussed the question of taking up the second phase of the School. Pattabhiramanji also pressed us to change the name from Bhavani Ammal School to Rajaji Vidyalaya or Vidyashram. He ultimately succeeded in extracting a tentative, reluctant "yes". Evidently with a view to sealing the matter, he expressed a desire to meet our President, Shri Dharamsey Khatau, the same day. Himself a great and quiet giver, Shri Khatau appreciated the touching gesture of Pattabhiramanji. He, however, gave his consent subject to one condition, viz. that the Kilpauk Campus should be christened as "Bhavani Ammal Campus."

Pattabhiramanji did not react either way to this suggestion. A gentleman and perfectionist to the core, he disliked vagueness and ambiguity. He shot off a letter to Shri Dharamseybhai on December 10, 1979 wherein *interalia,* he stated:

> "I am happy to note your acceptance of our request to the Bhavan to name the School at Kilpauk after Shri Rajaji. We feel highly honoured indeed. Though neither of my parents would be anxious to have their names immortalised either in print or in brick and mortar, I do appreciate your kind thought to name the Kilpauk Campus after my mother. *For the present,* we accept the suggestion but *do not wish to publicise the idea.* Who knows, in the months to follo :, we might have a bette: and more dignified name for

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the Campus?."

"We are very anxious that the Day Residential School project named after the memory of Shri Rajaji should gather strength and be an ideal institution, well worthy of Shri Rajaji and his high ideals of education and character-building in the young."

As hinted in his aforequoted letter, after two months he came back to the Campus-naming proposal. In the course of one of our telephonic conversations, he pleaded for the deletion of the suffix "Ammal." Said he: "Please let the Campus bear the name only of Bhavani, the Goddess Supreme." The plea was saturated with such sincerity and earnestness, one could not say "no." What a grandeur of vision, what self-effacement!

A great cricketer, Pattabhiramanji was connected with the Tamil Nadu Cricket Association ever since its inception in 1930. Recently he was elected Chairman of the Committee set up by the TNCA to organise its Golden Jubilee next year. His devotion to cricket was genuine and innumerable are the budding cricketers who benefited from his munificence. They include the now well-known cricketers like C. D. Gopinath, Venkataraghavan and Milka Singh. Besides being a keen reader of all cricket literature, he also contributed regularly to numerous cricket journals.

**Sri K. Venkatarama Iyer and Smt. Bhavani Ammal, father and mother of Sri Pattabhiraman.**

Pattabhiramanji was an earnest devotee of Jagadguru Sri Sankaracharya of Kanchi Kamakoti Peeth. At His command, he took a leading part in putting up the national Adi Sankara Memorial at Kaladi, which was inaugurated last year.

Belonging to the band of selfless benefactors of the Bhavan, Pattabhiramanji was one of the Vice-Chairmen of the Bhavan's Madras Kendra and a member of the Central Bhavan's Governing Council. His passing away is an irreparable loss to the Bhavan and to us all.

When the sad tidings of Pattabhiramanji's passing away reached Shri Jaisukhlal Hathi, Vice-President, who knew him very intimately in his capacity as Chairman of our Central Committee for Kendras, he sent the following telegraphic condolence message to Smt. Savitri Pattabhiraman:

"Extremely grieved to learn of the sad demise of Shri Pat-

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tabhiraman. It is a great personal loss to me. To the Bhavan it is a severe blow. He was one of the pillars of strength of the Bhavan. We are poorer by his loss. His contribution to building up the Bhavan's Madras Kendra is invaluable. Please accept sincere condolences. May God bless his soul."

Such was Pattabhiramanji's inalienable involvement with the Bhavan that only the previous afternoon, on July 19, 1979, he had called Shri S. Venkatachalam, Registrar of our Madras Kendra, and spent two hours with him reviewing the Kendra's progress and formulating plans for the future. He also fixed that afternoon a meeting of the Kendra Committee on August 6, 1979. Alas! that meeting had to be converted into a condolence meeting to mourn his death under the Presidentship of Rajyapal Prabhudasji Patwari.

Acknowledging my condolences, Smt. Savitri Pattabhiraman wrote to me that the best tribute to her beloved *prananath* would be to expeditiously fulfil the dreams he dreamt with regard to the development of the Bhavan's Madras Kendra. We are confident of doing so, for his *samkalpa* when he gave his donations and when he formulated the plans were absolutely motiveless.

The Bhavan's 41-year old history bears witness to this.

In 1938, Kulapati Munshiji started the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan in a single room in a City College with no capital save the promise of a monthly contribution of Rs. 250/- for one year from three of his friends besides his own. Soon followed Mungalalji Goenka's donation with which the Bhavan's Central Home project was taken up; in 1944 with Ghanshyamdasji Birla's donation was launched the Bhavan's monumental 11-Volume project of the *History & Culture of the Indian People*, the one and only successful project of the history of India from the Vedic Age to the Modern Age written by her own sons; in 1953, the construction of the Bhavan's Delhi Home was made possible by the donation of Girdharilalji Mehta. All these donors, like Pattabhiramanji, gave unasked and without any preconditions or selfish motive. The concerned projects have not only been duly completed according to plan but they are flourishing and rendering useful public service beyond our wildest dreams.

Pattabhiramanji was a *punyapurushta*. His memory shall live for generations to come in the good deeds he did, the good causes he supported and the good services rendered by the institutions he helped build up.

□□□

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# The Excellence of

# GANAPATI UPASANA

RATNA M. NAVARATNAM

Happily the Ganesh Chaturti festival this year coincides with the publication date of this issue of the "Bhavan's Journal"—August 26.

The Ganapati festival in Maharashtra is one that cuts across all caste and communal barriers. While it has certainly its religious aspects, the festival's secular and convivial aspects are, with the passage of time, gaining greater prominence. The Ganesa festival in Maharashtra which was given its present mass appeal by Lokamanya Tilak can be compared favourably with the Pooja festival in Bengal and the Onam festival in Kerala.

The Lokamanya breathed fresh life into an age-old festival with a view to welding the people together for the common cause of fighting for the national freedom which is the springboard for all other freedoms, including economic freedom and ultimately the highest freedom that every human being consciously or unconsciously aspires for, namely the freedom from death, ignorance and pain, the freedom denoted by the compound word *Sat-Chit-Ananda*.

Over the years this festival has emerged as Maharashtra's most cosmopolitan festival, providing means of livelihood to thousands of artisans who fashion the Ganapati images almost round the year in a myriad shapes, sizes and hues, incorporat-

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ing innovation after innovation every year reflecting the prevailing political mood of the nation and the State and even the latest in technological advance. Thousands of performing artists are in great demand to present their skills during the festival days in lowly chawls where Bombay's poor reside as also in sophisticated shamianas put up by the affluent. A whole host of skilled workers like carpenters, electricians and interior decorators too are in great demand during the festival.

Year after year the festival is looked forward to with great expectation by the 70 lakh souls who inhabit this almost soulless city of skyscrapers and miniscrapers juxtaposed with stinking, festering slums—whose sensitivity to things finer is nearly lost with the constant din and buzzle of the monstrous city through which daily roar electric trains at the rate of one every 3 minutes during peak hours, not to speak of thousands of gargantuan buses of the BEST undertaking, innumerable taxis and private cars and the reckless trucks carrying goods to and out of this industrial capital of India.

Ganapati festival is a time for joy and for cheering up the jaded spirits of the work-a-day people. It is a time for loud music and wild entertainment. But all these do not detract from the essential spiritual aspect of the festival.

We present here an article from one who has been inspired as it were, by the spirit of the elephant-headed God who is invoked for the removal of all obstacles. The article also answers the popular questions which people ask themselves and perhaps not bothering too much for getting answers—questions such as why coconuts are broken in front of Ganapati temples or why the *durva* grass is dear to Ganesa.

The article is an excerpt from the author's 270-page book, "Aum Ganesa," published by Vidya Bhavan, 341, Columbuthurai Road, Jaffna, Sri Lanka. The author unfolds in the Chapter on the Living Testament of Aum Ganesa, the manner in which her awareness of the Reality underlying Ganesa was stimulated, leading to the genesis of the book "Aum Ganesa". The purity of intention, evident authority and clear insight are reflected in the 18 chapters of the Book. It provides an exhilarating spiritual manna to overcome the tensions of the present age. Two of the author's works—"Tiruvachakam—The Hindu Testament of Love," and "Kartikeya—The Divine Child," have been published by the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.

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THE beauty of Ganapati worship is extraordinary in that it is not confined to any one particular country or sect alone. Forms of His worship prevailed in the Far East and in the Far West from Japan, China, Mongolia to California, Peru and Colarado, from Chinese Turkistan, Tibet and Nepal in the North, to the far flung isles of the Indian and Pacific oceans in the South. Thus He enjoys no copyright and His Upasana (mode of worship) stirs the energy of consciousness, pervading the entire cosmos and which is also dormant within man.

Edward Moor writnig in 1864, refers to Ganesa in the Hindu Pantheon as the God of prudence and policy. In the Voyage to India by Paolino de San Bartolomes, the author states "that statues which supply the place of milestones, and serve to guide strangers are found everywhere erected along high roads. As the Greeks and Romans employed for the purpose the God Terminus, the Hindus use their deity Ganesa who is called *Poleyar* by the common people. Hindu women who are married wear an emblem of Ganesa imprinted on a medallion called *Tali*, suspended from the neck by a string, serving as a love-pledge and as a token of their chastity and conjugal fidelity."

Fasting on Fridays, on Chaturti day in August and Vinayaka Sashti days in November, and offering red flowers, vanni or durva grass to his image have been practised by His worshippers in order to restrain Ganapati from imposing hindrances and also to steer their undertakings to success.

Today we see that Ganesa is the most popularly invoked God by the Hindus, who pray to Him at the beginning of all sacrifices and religious ceremonies, all compositions and writings and worldly affairs of moment. Every Hindu village has an image of Vigneswara, with or without a temple. He is on the right side of the entrance into Sivan temples, in the niche which is at the commencement of the innermost Prakara or circuit in the temple of Vishnu, and also in separate shrines in Siva temples in the South-West corner.

The beauteous form of the

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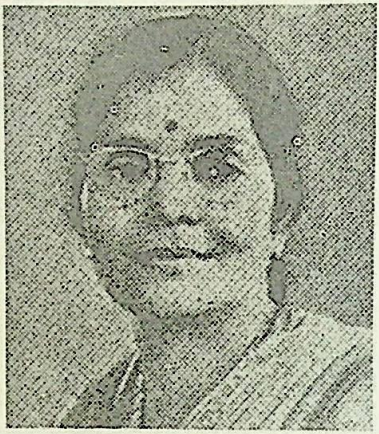

Elephant-faced God universally honoured as Pillayar is composed of three distinct characteristics. In the *Sakala* aspect, He combines the *gaja* (animal) and *nara* (human) forms and came to be known as *Gajanaratmaka rupa*. Manifested and unmanifested is His divine form which conveys His nishkala concept. *Suta Samhita* alludes to the planes of consciousness represented by the devas, men and animals uniting in the form of Ganapati.

*Why break coconuts before the Sanctum of Pillaiyar?*

In the Purva Karanagama is described the practice of breaking fresh coconuts by those who worship Pillaiyar. Instances are cited where such a worship had the beneficent effects of increased happiness and wealth. The coconut must have plenty of water inside, and the top tusk hiding the three eyes must be in good form. It betokens continuous showers of rains and prosperity to all in the land.

This act of breaking a coconut into pieces is symbolic of the descent of the Grace of Pillaiyar who frees us from the many restraints and ill-luck that beset our lives. As we offer at the altar of God, we purge ourselves of the three-fold impurities of egoism represented by the water inside the coconut, the white pulp representing our karma, and the shell signifying maya, the delusion of the world of change. The total act indicates the spirit of self surrender, as we approach His Holy Presence.

There is a story attached to this act of worship. Pillaiyar proceeded to Kasirajah's palace. An ogre entered under the door step to topple Pillaiyar as He trod on it. The all-knowing Pillaiyar foresaw the danger. So He commanded that all coconuts brought as "Purnakumbha" to greet Him should be broken on that particular door step. His order was carried out and the ogre gave up his ghost, as coconut after coconut was broken on his back.

*Why is Ganesa Worshipped with Durva Grass?*

There is a Puranic story that a woman whose livelihood was derived by selling grass as fodder, one day sought refuge from the

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rains with her bundles of grass in a nearby Pillaiyar Temple. Then a stray cow appeased its hunger by drawing the grass little by little from the tied bundles. Incidentally, an "arugu" grass from the bundle found its way to the feet of the Pillaiyar deity in that temple. When the temple authorities tried to chase the cow, it circumambulated the temple premises and would not leave. Seeing its predicament, Pillaiyar appeared before the cow and the grass-seller, and those who saw the vision wondered as to why such grace was meted out to them. The Lord assured them that the cow and the woman owing to the rains had fasted that day and offered the *durva* grass at his altar, and so he rewarded them with his vision.

There is yet another story. Once Pillaiyar appeared in the guise of a leper at the court of the renowned King Janaka and begged for food. He was given plenty of food, but his hunger was not appeased. He was fed by all in the city and yet his hunger was not satisfied. He arrived at the house of Virochana-Dhirichiras who were poor, but great devotees of Pillaiyar. They offered him only *durva* grass, which was all they had at that time. No sooner had they given the 'arugu', immediately a sumptuous meal appeared which He ate and was satisfied.

On another occasion, Pillaiyar swallowed the demon Analasuran who endangered the devas. As in Him was contained the whole world, the outer worlds were scorched with the flame ensuing from the Asuran thus swallowed by the Lord. So the Devas propitiated Him with twenty one "Arugu" grass and the consuming fire was put off. This was proof that the worship with the arugu grass was more potent than that of other sacrificial rites.

*Ganesa Speaks to the Author*

In the world of relative phenomena, with the play of opposites alluring man on all sides, it is possible to experience intuitive flashes of the absolute Truth on rare moments. Such an awareness was communicated to the author, on the eve of the *Vinayaka-Chaturti* festival sacred to Ganesa, in a dream in August 1974. In fact it seems at this distance of time to be not a dream of yesterday, but a consecrated experience in the eternal present.

It was evidently an ancient temple. There were massive granite pillars with enclosed precincts called *Piraharams*, or courtyards with spacious, high gateways. At a distance was a *Kerni*, a pond where red and white lotuses floated in the water. It might be the third *Piraharam*

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that this devotee was circumambulating, when she came across an enclosed, raised platform with an open door and five steep steps leading to the altar of God Ganesa.

There was an impressive, well-set, dark granite statue of the elephant-faced God, unadorned as was the custom before the ritual of (abishekam) oblation by water. On the third step sat a young woman dressed in a red saree. She was addressing plaintively Pillaiyar on the many oppressive afflictions around her, and profuse tears streamed from her eyes. She looked so intensely distressed that she attracted the author's attention. The newcomer stood on the opposite side of the steps, facing the sorrowful looking woman, and wondering at the magnitude of the problem that caused her grief. Then she cooped her hands and turned her view to the inner altar of Pillayar. He looked so entrancing. To her amazement the image of Pillayar animated with movement, and He raised the trunk gently and His gaze so translucent was fully directed to the newcomer. Strange it was that He was turning a deaf ear to the cry of lamentation from the sitting woman!

The inner jaws moved and He spoke distinctly, in measured tones. He went on speaking, whispering words of wisdom. She heard and yet not heard. The words flowed with ease into her stunned heart. The inner caverns creaked. She was only a witness. It was the woman clad in the red saree, who was the suppliant, and yet Pillayar was speaking to the newcomer. Who knows? She knew not. The holy image of Aum Ganesa raising the proboscis and speaking so clearly made her awe-struck with mute amazement—transfixed and yet uprooted. The instantaneous *dharsan* of the living Ganesa and His potent words of wisdom bewildered her and drove her with quick speed to accost the priest of the Temple who was passing just then by her side. She addressed him and wanted to know the truth of Pillayar speaking thus. Was it real or was it only imagination? Could it be that some fun-loving person had got behind the Pillayar statue to create the illusion of Pillayar addressing her directly?

The enlightened priest listened to her calmly and nodding in silence left her abruptly. She felt rudely shaken up, and awakened from her stupor. She realised remorsefully the absurdity of her doubt. Unnerved, she sped back again to Ganesa's altar, penitent and submissive. The weeping woman was not there. 'Speak yet once again', she roared in pain and her words

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re-echoed. She found herself alone, with folded hands in earnest worship. With tears, idle tears streaming down and imploring Pillayar to be her rock of repose. Mute, immutable Ganesa had ignited the flame of devotion. Sabled stillness, voiceless silence prevailed. Beautiful monologue. She prostrated on the steps and gazed yet again at the hallowed Image. The *swapna* state gave place to the *jagrat* state with the peal of the Temple Bells. Aum, Aum, they chimed. The waking consciousness registered the impact Divine, and thus was conceived *Aum Ganesa —The Peace of God.* Gladsome, winsome, and yet inscrutable like the Delphic Oracle was His Dharsan.

"Prasanna Vadanam Dyayeth
Sarva Vignopa Santih:"

The experience so significant left an indelible mark and influenced the author's approach to Aum Ganesa, the Son of Hara-Uma. He indeed is the great Yogesvara seated under the fruitful banyan tree in the chin-mudra form of the supernal Guru—*Dhakshinamurti,* and teaching in silence the four Vedic Seers. □□□

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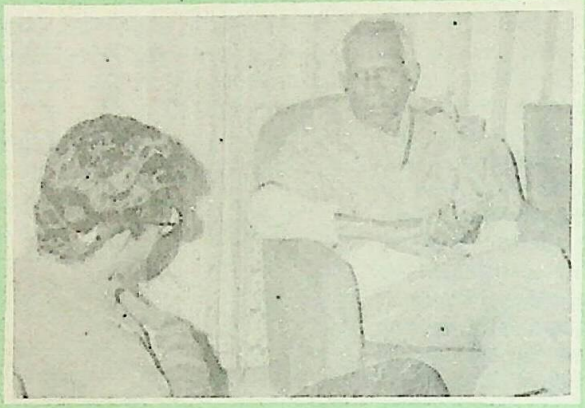

# An Interview with

Shri Pradeep Singh: *When were you born, sir?*

Swami Ranganathananda: 15th December, 1908, in a little village called Trikkur, six miles from the town of Trichur, in Kerala.

P.S.: *Can you tell some details about your childhood, adolescence, and youth, sir?*

Swami: I used to feel full of energy as a child. In my boyhood I took great interest in gardening and swimming. Even today I am a very swift swimmer. Then of course, games. Not much of study, except at the age of 14, when I took interest in Vivekananda literature.

P.S.: *Did you mix with other children and play?*

Swami: Plenty, plenty. I was very good at gathering children for play—and even for work. In that far-away-period, 1917-18, there was a road in the village which had become slushy due to heavy rain. I gathered boys of my age and set about making the road better. Such kind of group activities I used to love and organize. And I was very fond of play.

P.S.: *What kind of games?*

Swami: Mostly village games. What you call 'hadu dudu' or 'kabaddi' was my favourite. Then came marbles—if I sat down to play at noon I would get up only at seven in the evening. I was an expert in marbles. In fact whatever I used to do, I used to do with such zest that I would forget the whole world

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*Swami Ranganathananda of the Ramakrishna order is one of the greatest living exponents of Vedanta philosophy which has found great enthusiasts the world over. To the modern mind which shies away from dogma-ridden religions Vedanta comes as a fresh breeze with its all-too-rational appeal. The Swami is rarely autobiographical, but in this interview Shri Pradeep Singh a student of the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur, draws out many little-known details about the Swami.*

# Swami Ranganathananda

at that time.

P.S.: *Coming to your career, how were you attracted to the monastic life from early childhood?*

Swami: From early childhood there was a certain religious atmosphere in the house, where holy books like *Bhagavatam* were read by father and mother. I used to go to the nearby Siva temple regularly. Then I used to memorize so many verses and hymns, particularly Sankaracharya's hymns, in Sanskrit. The turning point came when I read that great book *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna.* That was at the age of 14, when all the pent-up spiritual emotions and feelings, vague and unorganized till then, became clarified.

A friend had borrowed the book from his school library in Trichur. He read it. Then he came and asked me, "Do you want to read this book?" I said, "Yes," and took the book without knowing what it was.

As I started reading it, it just gripped me. When I finished reading the *Gospel,* my friend came with another book. Then the works of Vivekananda came, and there was almost an explosion in my mind.

P.S.: *At that time you were 14?*

Swami: Fourteen and a half. Up to 17½ this continued—this kind of study. From this long study, two great ideas emerged strong in my mind. One, love of God who is the centre of

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our spiritual tradition; another, love of Man—love for the common people.

P.S.: *At such a tender age?*

Swami: There was absolute surety and clarity about these two goals—there was no need for worry or hesitation. The idea was driven home in my mind—that this life is to be dedicated to God and Man, God in Man. Swami Vivekananda emphasizes it again and again. "Look at these—the poor, the ill-treated, the exploited—they are your God. Worship them, serve them."

P.S.: *It appears that your family influence must have come in this. A spiritual atmosphere was prevailing in your home, you said.*

Swami: No, they were religious—but I will not call them spiritual. Because this kind of religion is associated with a feudal social set up, with all those *dos* and *don'ts*. But they were generally human, generally good hearted, within the limits of that feudal system. When I became slightly older, that feudal system did not suit me. Untouchability somehow repulsed me from the very beginning. I used to break all these rules even in the village. I used to go to school and come back without bathing. I would touch everybody after touching untouchables.

P.S.: *What was your idea behind it?*

Swami: Because I felt it was absolutely wrong! Why should you treat human beings in any other way? Nobody came to tell me all these things, but it came on its own. So I used to befriend the untouchables and even eat with them—all against opposition from the people at home. But I didn't care. That's why the untouchables used to adore me. In fact when I left for Sannyas, they shed tears. What feelings they had! And this became philosophically strengthened after reading the Vivekananda literature.

P.S.: *What did your parents think of the career you were going for?*

Swami: They wanted me to be with them, and they knew that I had an extra dose of public spirit. I never cared for myself, whether at home or outside. So they had great love for me, and expected that I will help them in their family affairs, improve their financial condition, and so on—as parents everywhere expect.

When they found me taking interest in this sort of literature at first they did not object. But when they found me getting deep into it they became afraid. So once they tried to stop me and even compel me a little. But I stood firmly and said, "This is my personal matter. Whatever I think worthwhile, I will do."

That was at the age of 15.

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And thereafter they didn't trouble me at all because I was so obedient and disciplined in everything else in the house. But in this matter I stood firm.

P.S.: *How did you get motivated to join the Ramakrishna Mission, of all places?*

Swami: Well, Swami Vivekananda writes and speaks to you all through—"Why not sacrifice one life for the good of the common people?" He repeats this again and again. "What is the use of this life for the sake of self-advertisement, when millions have been starving for ages? This is the time to do great work." These ideas there are aplenty in Vivekananda's lectures and letters. And when I used to read them, tears used to come from the eyes—what a noble life it is! So that idea grew in the mind, and within three years it became thoroughly fixed —this would be my goal in life.

Once I was addressing a public meeting in a place called Madanapalli in Andhra Pradesh. I didn't know who the audience were. They asked me this question. "What induced you to become a monk?" I replied, "When I read Vivekananda's lectures, this particular sentence gave me tremendous inspiration: 'There are more things to be done in this country than aspiring to become lawyers and picking up quarrels.'"

There was such a burst of laughter from the audience, because most of them were pleaders. This kind of literature is not just a book—it is a message, there is a special power in it. Every word is a source of power. This is my experience, and of thousands of others, including Romain Rolland, the great French biographer of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, and the man who received Nobel Prize for Literature. In his book on Vivekananda he says, "Vivekananda's words are great music, they are like Beethoven's symphonies, they are like the stirring rythms of the march of Handel's choruses. I cannot touch these utterances of Vivekananda—separated from me by more than 30 years' distance—without receiving a thrill through my body, like an electric shock. And what shocks and transports must have been produced, when, in burning words, they issued from the lips of the hero.?" When I first read it I said, 'How true!' Along with me there are thousands who have received that shock. A tremendous shock!

And even today there are hundreds who are experiencing that shock. That humdrum life becomes shocked. You get a real aim in life—worthwhile, noble. That is a great stimulus.

P.S.: *Sir, what were your first impressions on joining the Ramakrishna Mission?*

Swami: My home—I felt I

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belonged to it all through, in spite of pull from my home. I had loving parents, loving brothers and sisters, and very beautiful country atmosphere in Kerala.

P.S.: *How far was it from the Ashrama?*

Swami: Oh, nearly 300 miles away. So, to leave all that, I felt a little sorry. But the chance of living a great life in an ashrama enabled me to overcome those feelings. It was a poor Ashrama, not much to eat and hardly any convenience. But what did it matter? This life is given to us by Sri Ramakrishna—it belongs to him. Now I am only to work out his great Mission. That thought sustained me and I started working very hard for the first six years.

P.S.: *What type of normal routine did you lead there?*

Swami: The .Ashrama in Mysore had no money, it had no servants, it had no cooks. So I had to do all the cooking, washing, cleaning, and everything. For six years I was the cook, dish-washer, house keeper, gardener. And I did it with immense joy. Even when I look at it now—what a joy it was!

P.S.: *Can you recall your feelings at the time of your initiation?*

Swami: Oh yes. That happened in Ootacamund. A disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, by name Mahapurush Shivananda, was living there at that time. His real name was Tarak. We used to address him as Mahapurush Maharaj. He was the second President of the Ramakrishna Order.

The Swamiji in charge of Mysore, Swami Siddheshwarananda, who later developed the Ramakrishna Ashrama in Gretz near Paris, took me from Trichur to Mysore via Ootty, just after I left home. He advised me to take initiation from Swami Shivananda, a very lovable soul, and having no pretensions to Guruship or any such thing.

Three or four other youngsters also took initiation on the same day. I didn't know anything about initiation at that time. So I sat by his side and he gave me a *mantra*. Then he asked me, "Have you got anything to offer as *Gurudakshina* (offering to the Guru)?" I said, "Sorry, I have not got anything. I have come from my home only with a cloth, a shirt and a towel —nothing else." So he took three or four mangoes from his right side and handed them over to me. "Now give these back to me," he said. That was the *Gurudakshina*. It was such a simple matter.

But when I took that initiation, I remembered a dream that I had when I was about ten years old. That dream was re-enacted exactly in this particular situation. Just going up, up, up

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and then being ushered into the presence of a divine soul, a devout soul, who my heart said was Siva. As I sat by his side, he told me something.

I had told about the dream only to my mother. She also said, "Don't tell it to anyone, it is such a beautiful thing." So that was re-enacted exactly, sitting by the side an old man, whose name was Shivananda, and very high up, in Ooty. So that was an interesting experience.

P.S.: *Could you please tell something about the "brahmachari" stage?*

Swami: In those days the first three years were known as the probationary period. Then, in 1929, I took the vows of Brahmacharya. For this I went to Belur Math near Calcutta. That was a wonderful event, when my Guru, Swami Shivananda, was also present in front of us, and various *mantras* were chanted, and *homa* was performed. These *mantras* are wonderful. The essence of these *mantras* are, "I dedicate this life, with all its talents, for the service of God and Man."

As soon as the ceremony is over, we are given a new set of clothes, along with a new name. Parents gave the name Sankaran. Now it became Yati Chaitanya. The word *Chaitanya* means spiritual consciousness. For the next four years this continued. Then in 1933, Sannyas was given. That is something extraordinary. The Vedic Sannyas—its *mantras,* its method—is something extraordinary. The highest philosophy is put into practice there. "I am not the body, I am not the mind, I am not the senses; I am the pure Self, ever free, ever pure."

This knowledge we want to impress on the mind and we pray to God to give us that awareness. Then finally a new set of clothes, all of *gerua* colour, are given along with a new name, ending with the word *ananda.* The name is chosen by the Guru. Swami Ranganathananda—finally this name came —that's my monastic name. That's what Swami Shivananda did, so far I am concerned.

P.S.: *Out of the various Gurus you had in the Mission, who impressed you the most?*

Swami: You see, Ramakrishna's disciples belong to a category all by itself. And I had opportunity to meet several of them. Swami Vivekananda, the Holy Mother and Swami Brahmananda had passed away. So we could study them only, in books, and in tradition. Several other disciples of Ramakrishna, like Swami Premananda were there in the Mission. But direct access was only to Swami Shivananda. He was very remarkable, very human, and very modern, too. There were

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thousands who were inspired by him.

P.S.: *Talking about your present life, what is your daily routine when you are not travelling?*

Swami: If I am in charge of a centre, naturally all the responsibilities of the centre are on me. Our own personal life continues—daily meditation, study. Then there is work.

P.S.: *What are your hobbies and interests?*

Swami: Everything that interests man is interesting to me. So I don't know where my interest ends. Good work is a hobby for me. For example work in slums or serving a leper or meeting young students, talking with them, or addressing all sorts of audiences from administrators to businessmen. In fact all that we do is considered as worship of God. "Work itself is worship" is the teaching, and I fully accept that teaching.

P.S.: *Do you have a liking for any special kind of diet?*

Swami: I like everything. Whatever is available, I begin to like. I tell the mind, "You must take this now, you must like it." Immediately the mind says, "I like it." Once a doctor told me to live on three pounds of milk a day. Immediately I began to like that three pounds of milk. Even simple sago I had taken for six months. If you tell the mind, "You must like it," it begins to like it. That's a beautiful idea.

P.S.: *It is said that every human being has certain shortcomings. After so many years of rigorous discipline, what would you still like to improve in yourself?*

Swami: It is a continuous thing which Ramakrishna calls—*Jatodin banchi tatodin shikhi*, in Bengali. As long as I live, so long do I learn. And I fully accept this idea. So we try to improve ourselves, make ourselves better and better. This is the concept of human development which we live by. We want everybody to accept this idea.

P.S.: *Can you tell in brief the concept of God, sir?*

Swami: Concept of God? A concept is just an idea. And God is the Self behind the conceiver. The Eternal Self of Man—that's the Vedantic concept of God.

"Tell me about that God, Brahman, which is Infinite, but which is given in experience as the Eternal Self of all," Sage Yajnavalkya is asked in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*. Not a mere speculative Brahman, but a real, experiential Brahman. That is the basic teaching of the Upanishads—God can be realized. Why? He is the Self of all, He is closest to us, at the back of our own consciousness. That is the concept of the Divine.

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Sri Ramakrishna has said, "See God with eyes open when you live and work; see God with eyes closed, when you sit in meditation. Everywhere it is God only."

P.S.: *What has been the most difficult moments in your life?*

Swami: In running institutions there are many difficulties. We don't expect it to be otherwise. Work itself is a big challenge. With whatever strength is there, and with a sense of dedication and a prayerful attitude, we try to work. Mistakes have been there, but not too serious ones. And we don't expect life to be without mistakes. "Don't mind mistakes. In this battlefield of life, the dust of mistakes must be raised; he who is so thin-skinned as not to be able to bear them, let him get out of the ranks." These are the words of Swami Vivekananda.

When you work, there will be mistakes. But because of that I won't work—this is not a correct attitude. Do work, with the best of intention, best of motive, and correct whatever mistakes that may come.

P.S.: *How many years do you think you can devote to active Ramakrishna Mission work now?*

Swami: I think five to ten years of active work. Generally, we try to keep good health because we consider health very important for the work; not for one's own indulgence. The body is given to Sri Ramakrishna's work. So, that attitude makes you take care of the body, just to keep it fit and fine. But even then, old age will come, body becomes weaker and weaker—it is quite natural. So we face it when it comes to that. But it is always a joy that we have given the best life in service to other people. It is a great satisfaction to have spent one's life in service to the people, and God. Buddha said to Ananda, "Ananda, this body was so strong; it has climbed mountains, it has crossed forests —now it cannot stand on itself —see the nature of this body. It has to be tied together like an old bullock cart." But the Self in man is ever free. This attitude must be maintained, says Sri Ramakrishna. "Oh my body, be busy with your ailments, oh my mind, be busy with your joy of God." If there is strength of mind, we can really live up to that. Sometimes the body can pull the mind down. But we have to resist it.

P.S.: *There is a noticeable trend among outstanding boxers, for example, to take up preaching and do spiritual work after they retire. One example is George Foreman. What do you think is the reason for such a change for people who have spent their lives in violence and*

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*bloodshed?*

Swami: It must be the result of the general atmosphere of spiritual striving, you know, in parts of the world just now. They read by chance a book, or come in touch with a holy person—and that makes a change. That is how awakening comes. We call it spiritual awakening. A beautiful idea—you were leading a humdrum life—and here is something new.

P.S.: *The famous boxer Mohammed Ali keeps on proclaiming himself as a messenger of Allah for the Muslims. Looking at the self-discipline and hard work he has put in his career, don't you think he has the potential to make a great saint?*

Swami: Very much. Just one twist is enough. Why? The Vedantic teaching is that the Divine is sleeping in all of us. Just like a mine—you remove a stone, and you get the treasure. Many wrestlers in India have been highly spiritual. And they are devotees of Hanuman.

P.S.: *When was spiritual consciousness at its peak in India, sir?*

Swami: I can tell you Swami Vivekananda's opinion, because that's also what I appreciate. In the wake of Buddha, the highest moral development took place for the first few centuries. Then Buddhism became corrupted due to various other new influences coming in. Morality and spiritual life became so natural in the period of Buddha. The same humanistic impulse will come in the modern period too.

P.S.: *How will advancements in science and technology affect human relations in the future?*

Swami: It will be extremely bad if it is going on under the present philosophy of Man. What is that? An organic system seeking organic satisfactions. We are the Infinite Atman, that's our true nature—if this attitude prevails, then none of these things can harm us. Otherwise we will be reduced to *Animal Farm Society*. But once this deeper philosophy comes, none of these things can affect the human situations. We see life in a higher dimension. That higher dimension is absent today, ignored today, trifled today; therefore this confusion. Otherwise not. Knowledge can never be dangerous as long as we know it has two dimensions—knowledge of the world, knowledge of God. □□□

*He is a wise man who does not grieve for the things which he has not, but rejoices for those which he has.*

Epictetus

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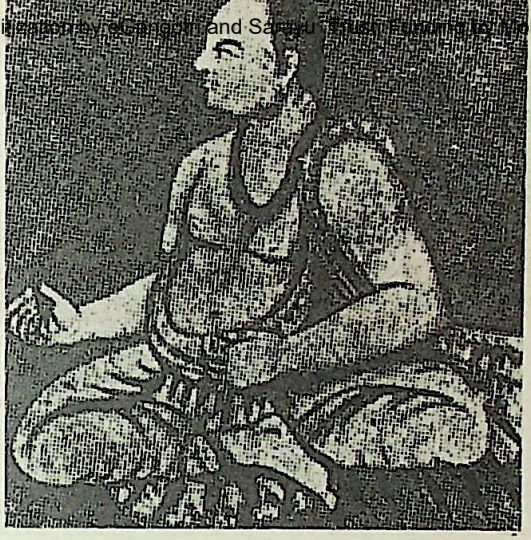

# BHAKTI MOVEMENT

R. KRISHNAMURTHY

The path of devotion which is acclaimed as the sweetest, easiest and safest of all means of God-realisation is said to be especially suited to this age when distractions abound and men lack the stamina to pursue strenuous yogic and other esoteric paths. The present article says that the Bhakti Movement owes its origin to South India.

THANKS to the Devotion (Bhakti) Movement which started in South India during 1000-1400 A.D. and which had its echo in North India, a good number of saints and saint-composers sprang up in different parts of South, as if by divine will, to infuse "Bhakti" into the mind of the people.

From the second half of the 16th century to the end of the 17th century, Deccan witnessed the greatest religious transformation brought about by Purandara Dasa and Kanaka Dasa of Karnataka, Kshetrajna and Bhadrachala Ramadas of Andhra, who spread the 'Bhakti' cult through their soul-stirring songs.

Likewise Tamil Nadu from the first half of the 17th century to the second half of the 18th century witnessed the emergence of the five great Saints in the Cauvery delta who blazed their

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trail in the field of 'Bhajana and Nama Siddhanta'. They were Sridhara Venkatesa Ayyaval, Bhagavannama Bodhendra, Sadasiva Brahmendra, Narayana Tirtha and Sadguruswamy. They lived during the reign of Nayak and Maratha rulers of Thanjavur. They contributed substantially to the musical and devotional hymns of Tamil Nadu. They led pure lives which were replete with miracles, and which served as beacon-light to the lay public.

Sridhara Venkatesa Ayyaval, Bhagavannama Bodhendra and Sadasiva Brahmendra were contemporaries. While Narayana Tirtha lived in the middle of the 17th and early part of the 18th century, Sadguruswamy was born in the second half of the 18th century. The historicity of these saints and their contributions are dealt with separately. While Sadguruswamy is acknowledged as the codifier of "Bhajana Paddhati," Ayyaval and Bodhendra laid the corner-stone for a new school of religious thought called "Nama Siddhanta" and "Nama Sankirtana."

If a person desires to extol or establish a particular creed or school of thought, it becomes his first and foremost duty to derive authority and sanction for it from the Scriptural Trinity already referred to. Otherwise his creed or cult runs the risk of being rejected as heterodox. Before looking into the support offered by the Scriptural Trinity for the above-mentioned school of thought, it is but proper to unravel the message carried in "Nama Siddhanta" and "Nama Sankirtana."

*What is Nama Siddhanta?*

It may be argued by many as to what is there in name. In fact everything is in name. When we praise or condemn a person, we have free recourse to his (or her) name. Apart from this, our emotions get free outlet while uttering names. In *Vishnu Sahasranama* as well as in *Bhagavata* the efficacy of uttering Lord's name has been expounded as follows:

यानि नामानि गौणानि

*(Vishnu Sahasranama)*

नामान्यनन्तस्यमहत्तेकितानि

*(Bhagavata)*

Every name of the Lord denotes each one of His attributes. According to the votaries of Nama Siddhanta, in Kali Yuga, mere utterance of the Lord's name such as Shiva or Rama or Krishna at all possible times will wipe out his sins and will endow him with good health, long life, material prosperity, learning, foremost sons, fame and finally grant him spiritual release. This has been well stated in the *Daya Shatakam* by Sridhara Venkatesa Ayyaval in

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the last sloka which runs as follows:

एवं दयास्त्वमिमं पठतां हि भक्त्या-
ऽरोग्यायुरच्छ शिवभक्ति धनद्धि विद्याः
अग्र्यान् सुतामपि यशश्च विमुक्तिमन्ते
श्री पार्वतीशकरुणा दिशति प्रहृष्टा ।।

Of the four Yoga 'margas' prescribed in the *Gita*, namely, the Karma, Raja, Bhakti and Jnana in Kaliyuga, we find that most of us are not strict adherents *either* of Karma or Bhakti yoga—and not to speak of Raja and Jnana yogas. Even the great saint-composer, Tyagaraja has expressed his inability to practise any yoga other than Bhakti in the following song when he addresses his Ishta Devata, Sri Rama:

"Bhaktimargamunoo Teliyaledu Rama!"

When such is the case with Saint Tyagaraja, one need not dilate on the sorry plight in which the ordinary run of the Hindus is placed. Even Bhakti yoga requires, on the part of its practitioner, constant meditation on God and His glory. But 'Nama Sankirtana' is easier than even the Bhakti yoga for practice, and it is least exacting on the part of its practitioner. It requires only the mere utterance of Lord's name 'Shiva or Rama' with full concentration and sincerity. The chanting of names like Rama, Krishna and Shiva can be done by any person and at any time. As Ayyaval puts it in *Akhya Shashti*, it can be practised by anyone excepting the dumb.

शिवाख्ये, नो जाने शिवमितरदेवानपि जनन्यथि क्वामी क्वासावहमहह दिष्टचा तु भवतीम् ।
समीक्षे मत्सर्वश्रममुषमिहामूक सुलभा स्वलब्धृस्वाधीनाखिलभुवन-साम्राज्य विभवाम् ।।

When the above sloka is freely rendered in English, it runs as follows:

"O Name of Shiva: I know not Shiva or the other Gods, O Mother! where are they and where am I (this poor being) But ah! luckily I see you the remover of all my troubles, you who are easy to access here to anyone except the dumb and whose devotee becomes the master of the riches of the suzarainty of the entire universe" (Dr. Raghavan).

The utterance of names like Shiva, Rama, Krishna and so on does not require any special effort. It is not conditioned by time, person and place. The only requisite for its practitioner is the will to chant it with devotion and sincerity. Therefore, it is no wonder that it is within the reach of all.

The following stanzas illustrate the above-mentioned point.

किं जपन् मुच्यते जन्तुः
*(Vishnu Sahasranama)*

जन्तुः जननधर्मा। अनेन जन्तुशब्देन जपार्चनस्तवनादिषु यथायोग्यं सर्व-

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प्राणिनामधिकारं सूचयति ।

*(Sankara Bhasya* of the *Sahasranama)*

न देशकालवक्तृणां नियमः कीर्तने स्मृतः ।
नावस्थानां च नियमः शौचा शौच-
विनिर्णयः ।
परं संकीर्तनादेव राम रामेति मुच्यते ।।

*(Vaishvanara Smriti)*

न देशनियमो राजन् न कालनियमस्तथा ।
विधचे नात्र संदेहो विष्णोर्नामानुकीर्तने ।।
गच्छंस्तिष्ठन् स्वपन् वापि पिबन्नश्नन्
नमंस्तथा ।
कृष्ण कृष्णेति संकीर्त्य मुच्यते पाप-
कञ्चुकात् ।।
ध्यायेन्नारायणं देवं स्नानादिषु च कर्मसु ।
प्रायश्चित्तं हि सर्वस्य दुष्कृतस्येति वै
श्रुतिः ।।
प्रायश्चित्तान्यशेषाणि तपःकर्मात्मकानि वै ।
यानि तेषामशेषणां कृष्णानुस्मरणे परम् ।।
(*Vishnupurana* 2.6)

This simplicity of 'Nama Uccharana' is highlighted in the *Mahabharata* especially in the dialogue between Bhishma and Yudhishthira. In fact the efficacy of chanting Lord's name was put to test by no less a person than Bodhendra himself on the banks of the Pushkarini of Jagannatha Kshetra when the poor brahmin lady's muslim dress turned Hindu to the utterance of Rama Nama. Even ordinary mortals can experience the miracle produced by uttering the Lord's name with sincerity and devotion. Ayyaval also refers to the miracle, in his Akhya Shashti. of Ajamila, a brahmin, who in spite of his evil past drove away the messengers of Yama by calling his son named Narayana before breathing the last.

"When Kali engulfs the whole world with its floods, the ordained dharmas of varna and asrama are submerged. The paths of attaining God by contemplation are silted up. This is clear. Ah! Name of Shiva! You alone flourish in all glory (singly) to save the universe!" (Dr. Ragavan). Thus proclaims Ayyaval in his '*Akhya Shashti.*'

स्वकीयैः स्नोतोभिर्जगदखिलमाक्रामति
कलौ
निमग्नास्ते वर्णाश्रमनियमधर्माः
स्फुटमिदम् ।
प्रलीना ध्यानादि भंजनसृतिरेका पुनरये
परित्रातुं विश्वं पुरभिदभिश्चे त्वं
विजयसे ।।

A view of the Ayyaval mutt (house) in Tiruvisanuloor village

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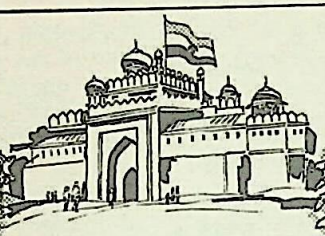

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Again to quote Ayyaval: When man's life is ebbing out, and when his strength has been broken and the senses have become feeble, O name of Shiva! you alone stand surety for the great welfare (of Moksha) to him whose tongue or ear you have approached. From whom else, at that time, could even an iota of help come forth? (Dr. Raghavan).

दशयामन्त्यायां दलितबलदीनेन्द्रिययतेः
महेशाख्ये जिह्वां श्रवणमपि वा
संश्रितवति ।
भवत्येवास्य प्रति भवति भद्राय महते
तदा केनान्येनोन्मिषतु कणिका
वाऽप्युपकृतेः ।।

The above stanzas make the efficacy of 'Nama Uccharana' abundantly clear. The only preliminary required is that the tongue has to be attuned to it. Even the Tamil Saint Appar proclaims the efficacy of uttering Lord's name in most eloquent manner:

"O Shiva even if I forget you, let not my tongue fail to utter your name."

In the domain of 'Nama Uccharana' there is no distinction between Hari and Hara. This has been amply demonstrated by Bhagavannama Bodhendra in his *Harihara-dvaita-bhushana*. This work consists of three parts: In the first, by examining the Mahopanishads, the Narayanopanishad and the Vaishnavo-panishads, the author says that all these refer to the greatness of Vishnu and in no way do they speak of the inferiority of other Gods. In the second, by an analysis of the Shaivopanishads like Atharva Sikha, it is shown that they refer to the greatness of Shiva and not to the inferiority of other Gods. In the third, the author profusely quotes from the Vedas, Itihasas and Puranas and proves that there is no difference between Hari and Hara. Therefore, by uttering the names Rama, Krishna or Shiva, the effect produced is the same. In Namamritarasayana, Bodhendra heralds 'Nama Uccharanam' as the redeemer of all sins committed by a person:

स्त्रीपुंनपुंसकान्यतमेन येनकेन चिज्जनेनावशेन वा उन्मादेन वा श्रद्धया वा श्रद्धां विना वा...अन्यप्रयोजनाय वा यथाकथंचित् कृतनामकीर्तनेन सकलपापक्षयो मुक्तिश्च भवत्येवेत्यर्थो दर्शितः ।

*Scriptural Authority for Nama Siddhanta*:

When profound and divine scholars like Ayyaval and Bodhendra have delved deep into the subject of Nama Siddhanta and written the two famous works, *Bhagavannama Bhushana* and *Namamritarasayana* respectively quoting the Scriptural Authority, it does not become well of me to search for Scriptural authority in support of Nama Siddhanta. The work of

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Ayyaval, namely, *Bhagavannama Bhushana*, has not yet been traced out, but this has been referred to in three places by Bodhendra himself, his contemporary, in his work entitled *Namamritarasayana.* But the commonly quoted references in support of Nama Siddhanta are, however, elucidated below.

The Scriptures, especially, the Vedas, Itihasas, and Puranas which are 18 in number, abound in statement, expounding the efficacy of uttering Lord's name, to attain 'Moksha' in Kali Yuga. Bhagavannama Bodhendra cites some lines from *Yajur Veda* in support of his tenet, which means—

"O Vishnu, I being adept in discerning the greatness underlying the chanting of your work praise you.

In the *Rig Veda* it has been stated to utter Vishnu's name at least once in order to gain spiritual knowledge. The text relating to this run as follows:—

अस्य जानन्ता नाम चिद्विविक्तन
महस्ते विष्णो सुमतिं भजामहे ।

In the Shanti Parva of *Mahabharata,* Lord Krishna brings out the greatness of uttering His name in the following manner:

"In the *Rig*, Yajur and Atharvana Vedas, Puranas, Upanishads, Jyautisha, Yoga and Sankhya Sastras, and Ayurveda, the great sages have sung the glory of my name."

In the *Brihan Naradiya Purana* how the attainment of Moksha in Kali Yuga centres around 'Hari Nama Sankirtana' is highlighted in the following sloka:

हरेर्नामैव नामैव नामैव मम जीवनम् ।
कलौ नास्त्येव नास्त्येव नास्त्येव गतिरन्यथा ।।

In *Vishnupurana* it has been again abundantly made clear that deliverance in Kali Yuga lies in "Nama Sankirtana". While meditation on God ensures deliverance in Krita Yuga, in Treta and Dwapara Yugas, performance of 'Yajna and Puja' respectively bring about salvation for the yearning souls. The relevant sloka runs as follows:

ध्यायम् कृते यजन् यज्ञैस्त्रेतायां द्वापरेऽर्चयन् ।
यदाप्नोति तदाप्नोति कलौ संकीर्त्य केशवम् ।।
(*Vishnu Puranam* 6-2-17)

The following slokas from *Vishnu Purana, Brihan Naradiya Purana* and *Vishnu Sahasranama Bhashya* respectively highlight the greatness of Nama Uccharanam:

अवशेनापि यन्नाम्नि कीर्तिते सर्वपातकैः ।
पुमान् विमुच्यते सद्यः सिंहत्रस्तैर्मृगैरिव ।।
(*Vishnu Purana*)

हरिर्हरति पापानि दुष्टचित्तैरपि स्मृतः ।
अनिच्छयाऽपि संस्पृष्टो दहत्येव हि पावकः ।।
(*Brihan Naradiya Purana*)

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ज्ञानतोऽज्ञानतो वापि वासुदेवस्य कीर्तनात् ।
तत्सर्वं विलयं याति तोयस्थं लवणं यथा ।।

(*Sankara Bhashya Vishnu Sahasranama*

It may be seen from the second sloka that the heap of sins committed by a wicked person get blasted when he utters the name of God even without special will on his part.

According to *Vasishtha Smriti* anyone who practises Harinama Kirtana such as Krishna, Rama is said to have gained in religious merit equivalent to that of performing thousand Rajasuya Yajnas. The text runs as follows:

कृष्ण कृष्णेति रामेति जपन् यो हरितत्परः ।
राजसूयसहस्राणां फलमाप्नोति मानवः ।।

Likewise it is authenticated in *Visvamitra Smriti* that taking bath in sacred rivers will not confer even a portion of the religious merit to be obtained by chanting Lord's name.

From the foregoing discussion it is seen how easy is the practice of Nama Sankirtana even for the ordinary run, and it is worth mentioning at this juncture that, in view of its simplicity, people who live in Kali Yuga are considered to be most fortunate in this respect. This is stated even in *Bhagavata* also.

कलेर्दोषनिधेः राजन् अस्ति ह्येको महान् गुणः ।
कीर्तनादेव कृष्णस्य मुक्तसंगः परं व्रजेत् ।
(*Bhagavata*, 12-3-51)

R. Krishnamurthy has been a frequent contributor to prominent dailies like **The Hindu** on religious, historical and literary topics. The present article is an excerpt from "The Saints of the Cauvery Delta" published by the Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi. Price Rs. 45.00 Pp. 136.

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Therefore the chanting with sincerity and devotion of the following Taraka mantra, which was taught by Sage Kratu to Vishnu Gopar will enable one to attain salvation. Tradition has it that when Vishnu Gopar and his wife Kirti Rani were engrossed in prayer to Goddess Durga for blessing them with a child, they were informed by a divine voice (Ashariravani) that no one who had not practised Hari Nama Sankirtana, would be blessed with a child.

हरे राम हरे राम राम राम हरे हरे ।
हरे कृष्ण हरे कृष्ण कृष्ण कृष्ण हरे हरे ।।

Hence it directed them to approach appropriate Guru, and seek his blessings. Sage Kratu initiated him into Nama Sankirtana, and brought home the truth to him that it can be practised by any one irrespective of Varnashrma Niyamas and Dharmas and all other worships do not yield the desired result unless

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Ayyaval, namely, *Bhagavannama Bhushana*, has not yet been traced out, but this has been referred to in three places by Bodhendra himself, his contemporary, in his work entitled *Namamritarasayana.* But the commonly quoted references in support of Nama Siddhanta are, however, elucidated below.

The Scriptures, especially, the Vedas, Itihasas, and Puranas which are 18 in number, abound in statement, expounding the efficacy of uttering Lord's name, to attain 'Moksha' in Kali Yuga. Bhagavannama Bodhendra cites some lines from *Yajur Veda* in support of his tenet, which means—

"O Vishnu, I being adept in discerning the greatness underlying the chanting of your work praise you.

In the *Rig Veda* it has been stated to utter Vishnu's name at least once in order to gain spiritual knowledge. The text relating to this run as follows:—

अस्य जानन्ता नाम चिद्विविक्तन
महस्ते विष्णो सुमतिं भजामहे ।

In the Shanti Parva of *Mahabharata,* Lord Krishna brings out the greatness of uttering His name in the following manner:

"In the *Rig*, Yajur and Atharvana Vedas, Puranas, Upanishads, Jyautisha, Yoga and Sankhya Sastras, and Ayurveda, the great sages have sung the glory of my name."

In the *Brihan Naradiya Purana* how the attainment of Moksha in Kali Yuga centres around 'Hari Nama Sankirtana' is highlighted in the following sloka:

हरेर्नामैव नामैव नामैव मम जीवनम् ।
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Nama Sankirtana is well regarded and practised. The story goes that the prayer of the above-mentioned couple was responded and they were blessed with Radha Devi Herself as their child. This anecdote is found in *Brahmanda Purana*.

Because of the simplified procedure involved in Nama Sankirtana, one may be carried away by the impression that one can go on committing sin after sin and lead an obnoxious life, and then seek salvation side by side in Nama Sankirtana. Though Nama Sankirtana offers protection to and even welcomes to its fold most wicked persons, it means that once they have realized moral depravity of their acts and turned over a new leaf, they should not retrace their forbidden steps and fall into the abyss of wickedness. The life-history of Saint Arunagirinathar is an instance worth remembering. Saint Arunagirinathar, the author of *Tiruppugazh* pieces in Tamil was given to a life of utmost moral depravity. He squandered all his wealth on sensual pursuits, and was even afflicted with leprosy. At this critical juncture in his life, Jnana dawned on him, and he threw himself to the mercy of Lord Muruga. Never did he retrace his steps, and he visited all the Muruga shrines in Tamil Nadu and glorified them in his immortal *Tiruppugazh* pieces.

*Padma Purana* has laid down the following ten commandments for the practitioners of Nama Sankirtana for strict adherence:—

1. The practitioner of Nama Sankirtana should not insult or harm saints or persons of saintly disposition and should not indulge in calumny of any person.

2. They should not differentiate between Shiva and Vishnu.

3 & 4. They should not treat their *guru* and the *Vedas* with scant respect.

5. They should have implicit and impeccable faith in the efficacy of utterance of Nama.

6. Because the utterance of Nama absolves one of his or her sins, it does not mean that one can go on committing sin after sin.

7. The mind of persons who practise Nama Sankirtana should be soaked in ahimsa, satya, asteya, brahmacharya and aparigraha.

8. They should not preach Nama's efficacy and significance to those who do not have faith in it.

9. What karma enjoins one to follow in day-to-day activities, should not be deliberately ignored at the cost of Nama Uccharana.

10. They should not be unkind and arrogant in their behaviour. □□□

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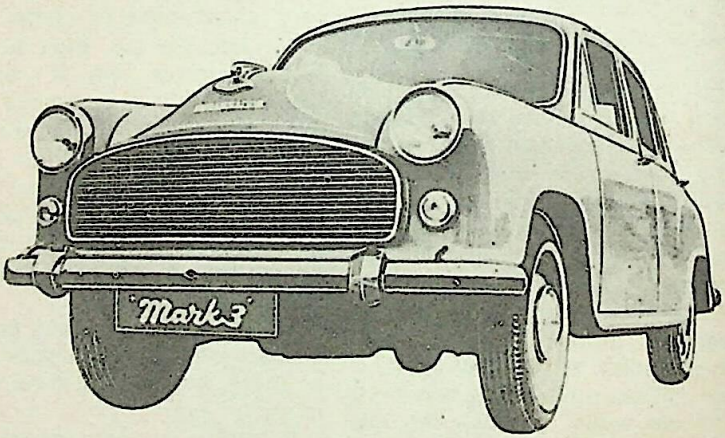


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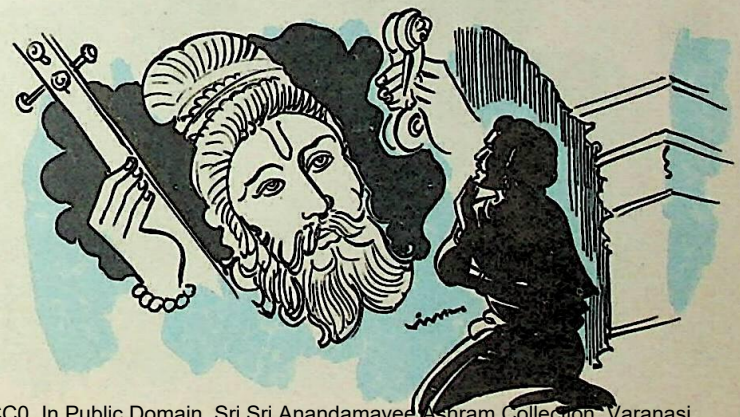
# SRIMAD BHAGAVATAM-26

KAMALA SUBRAMANIAM

## 49. KING PRACHINABARHIS

VIJITASHVA, son of Prithu, ruled the kingdom after his father had gone away to the forest. He appointed his four brothers to rule the four quarters and himself ruled the entire kingdom. Vijitashva had a wife by name Nabhasvati and she bore him a son by name Havirdhana. This son, however, was not like other children. Even when he was a young man he declared that he had no interest in ruling the kingdom and he refused to be caught up in the toils of kingship. He went away to the forest in pursuit of salvation.

Havirdhana had a wife Havirdhani and she bore him six sons before he abandoned the kingdom. Barhishat was the eldest of them. He married Shatadruti, the daughter of the lord of the seas. She was so beautiful that, it is said, when the couple went round him during the wedding



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ceremony, the god of fire fell in love with her and desired her.

Ten sons were born to this couple and they were famed as the Prachetas brothers. They grew up to be god-fearing, well-versed in dharma shastra and ever devoted to Narayana. Their father asked them to take upon themselves the task of continuing the line and, as a preparation for it, they entered the sea and there, they performed intense *tapas*.

King Barhishat was a man who believed in the performance of *yagnyas*. He was fascinated by it and so absorbed was he in it that he was always performing one *yagnya* after another. In course of time this became with him, an obsession. The moment one *yaga* was completed he would begin another. At one time the entire earth was covered by the *kusha* grass which was used for the *yagnyas*. He got the name Prachinabarhis because of the *kusha* grass which was spread on the face of the earth with the tip of each blade pointing towards the east.

When his sons were away performing *tapas* the father was still engaged in performing *yagnyas*. Sage Narada took pity on him and told himself: "This good king is wasting all his life in pursuit of the *Karma Kanda* which is not helping him to prepare himself for salvation. I will go to him and show him the easier path of *Bhakti* and save him."

Narada went to the presence of the king Barhishat. The king honoured him as was his due and having placed him in an elevated seat, the king sat at his feet. Narada enquired after the welfare of the country and then said: "O king, I see that you are engaged in the performance of innumerable *yagnyas*. But you will never realise salvation as a result of this *Karma Kanda*. The removal of sorrow and the attainment of happiness are the two things man desires in this world. But the wise are of opinion that these *karmas*—the performing of them—do not grant either of these wishes to the performer. Is there, then, a third objective which you are pursuing? Tell me what your purpose is in the incessant performing of *yagnyas*." The king said: "My lord, involved as I am in the *Karma Kanda* and its performance, I have not been able to think of a third objective. Salvation has not come to my mind till today. Please have the goodness to tell me what I should do to attain salvation. I realise that I have been foolish. I have been so absorbed in the *Karma* aspect of the *yagnas* that I have not once thought of the other paths: the *yogas* they speak about. I have not ever once thought of *Moksha*.

"Man is caught up in the web made up of affections of different

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types: love for wife and children, love of the home, love of wealth, love of kingdom. He is foolish and he is ignorant of the ways of reaching the other world. In his involvement with the things of this world he has not considered that there is another life after this: that there is another world for which one has to prepare oneself. My lord, all these many years I have been like this and your words have made me pause for a while and think. Till now I had no time to think; so, busy was I with action. You now tell me that all this will not lead me to the other world. What am I to do? Please teach me the method by which I can get freedom from the bondage of *Karma*. What should I do to shake off this obsession and save myself? Please help me."

Narada said: "By performing *yagnyas* which are so many that it is easier to count the grains of sand on the shore of the sea, do you know what you have gained so far? I will show you." The sage led the king to the terrace of the palace. With his *yogic* power he summoned the cows which the king had sacrificed since so long.

"Look", said Narada. "Look at the thousands and thousands of cows which you have killed thus far, in the name of *yagnya*. They are waiting for you to die so that they can wreak their vengeance on you. They are so angry with you they are just waiting to gore you with their horns which are hard and firm as rods of iron."

The king looked at them and then at Narada. He spoke not a word. Narada led him back to the interior of the palace and said: "I will relate to you the story of PURANJANA which is as old as the hills. Listen to it carefully and you will enjoy it. It is a very beautiful story about a handsome man and a lovely damsel. Sit and listen to me."

## 50
## THE STORY OF PURANJANA

There was once a famous king by name Puranjana. He had a friend whose name was Avignyata. This friend had earned that name because no one knew what he did and how he acted. His presence was unknown to everyone and unless one thought of him and asked him to be with him he would not make his appearance. Puranjana and he were very great friends. In fact they were considered by everyone as "the inseparables". They would ever be together: and so it was for a long while.

As time went on Puranjana became restless. Avignyata was not. Though he was warned by his friend, Puranjana left his home and the company of his friend and went in search of a new home, a new dwelling place.

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He wanted a city fit enough to be ruled by him and he searched all the world over for it. For a long time he wandered in search of a city for himself. He travelled far and wide and yet, he could not find what he was looking for. He was very unhappy since many of the places he found and even tried, were not good enough for him to stay in. And so he kept on travelling.

Once on the southern slopes of the Himalaya he found a city. It was a beautiful city. Nine gateways adorned it. There were many turrets and there was a great wall around it. Lovely gardens were to be found everywhere and all around the city was dug a moat. The houses in the city were well designed. They were built out of gold, silver and iron and inlaid with precious stones: sapphires, crystal, amethyst, pearls, emeralds and rubies. There was a mansion with seven floors. The streets were wide and large. There was a market place, there were bazaars and there were gambling places in plenty. Pillars adorned with corals and silks were to be found everywhere. The city was called Bhogavati.

Adjoining the city was a heavenly garden. All the trees of heaven were found there. The birds and the bees vied with each other in making sweet music. There was a lake and across the lake blew a pleasant

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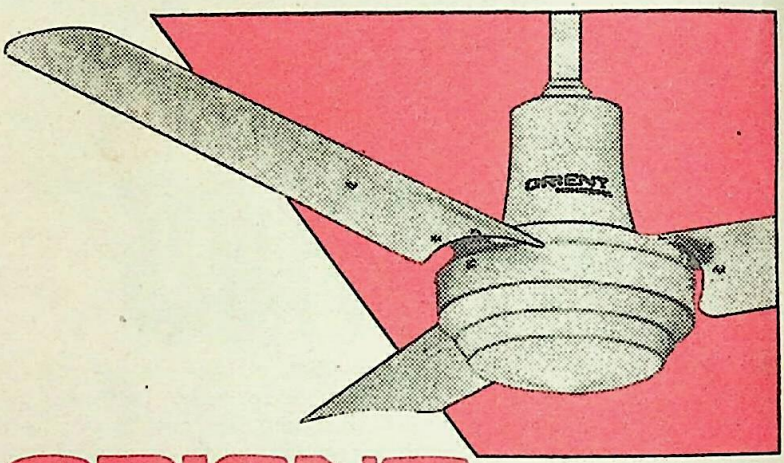


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cool breeze. The breeze was laden with the perfume of innumerable flowers. The trees on the edge of the lake made the place delightfully shady and inviting. The cuckoos were making sweet music in the mango grove and the king, Puranjana wandered around drinking in the beauty of the place.

All on a sudden, there came within his sight a beautiful woman. He thought that she was a heavenly damsel. Her form was captivating. Her eyes, her face, her lips, her hips and her lovely breasts were intoxicatingly lovely. She might have been about sixteen. Her eyes looked here and there and her eyelids fluttered like the wings of a butterfly. She looked at him and away from him. The golden earrings which she wore in her small ears seemed to whisper secrets into her ear making her blush. She was dark and her form was swaying captivatingly as she moved.

Puranjana stood rooted to the spot gazing at her. He came to his senses for a moment and he saw that she was strangely attended. There seemed to be ten main attendants and these ten had each, a hundred women as companions. An immense cobra with five heads was walking ahead of her as though keeping close watch on her: guarding her.

Puranjana pulled his eyes away from the others and looked at her once again. The language of her eyes; the sighs which made her breasts heave; the way she tried in vain to cover them with the silk which she had draped on her shoulders; the way she stood tracing patterns on the ground with her toe-nail: all these made him realise that she did not resent his presence: that she was also interested in him. A smile hovered on her lips and he went near her. He had to speak to her or else he would die: so he thought.

He asked her: "Tell me who you are. You are so beautiful. Your eyes, timid like those of a deer are making me mad. They are like the petals of a lotus. Whose daughter are you? Where have you come from? Where do you belong? Are you a woman of the heavens come down to the earth to see its beauty? Are you Hree, the wife of Dharma? Bhavani, the consort of Mahadeva? Are you Sarasvati looking for Brahma? Perhaps you are Lakshmi, the wife of Lord Narayana. Beauty like yours cannot be just earthly. What are you thinking about? In your preoccupation the lotus which was in your hand has fallen down unnoticed. You are not heavenly since your feet are touching the ground. You are earthly. You have made me your slave by your beauty and

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by your captivating ways. Your dark eyes have made me your slave. Will you become mine? I have fallen in love with you. Please make me happy by becoming my wife. Tell me who these attendants are: these ten men and these hundreds of women. How is it possible for you to have this dreadful snake with you all the time? I am sorely puzzled. Please lift up your eyes and look at me."

With a smile and with halting words she spoke to him. She said: "I do not know who I am nor do I know who created me. All I know is that I belong to this city and that I live here. I do not know who built this city either.

"These men, my lord, are my companions and these women who are their attendants are also my friends. This five-headed snake guards this city when I am asleep and it is ever with me. It is my good fortune that you have come to me. You have come in search of pleasure and I can, with the help of these friends of mine, gratify all your desires. You can be the lord of this city. I will be by your side. You can drink the cup of joy to the fill for a hundred years. You are the ideal man to become my husband. I would never have been happy with a man who is a scorner of the pleasures of the senses: who is ever thinking of death which is imminent: who is always thinking of tomorrow and worries about it. Such a man is not dear to me. But you are different. Your thoughts are only of pleasure. You have no thought of tomorrow nor are you scared at the thought of death. You will be satisfied with the happiness that you can get in the present. There is nothing so wonderful as the love between man and woman. Nothing else can equal that happiness. You desire me and I am very much in love with you. Come with me to the city called Bhogavati and we will live happily without a thought for anything else." □□□

BHAVAN'S
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**Based on the book "Krishnam Vande Jagatgurum" in Hindi by Shri Ghanshyamdasji Birla.**

# KARNA

## The Magnanimous and The Magnificent

C. K. VENKATARAMAN

### SCENE II

AS was his wont, Karna was engaged in worshipping Lord Surya at noon. Kunti Devi reached the spot alone. Karna was so much engrossed in his worship that he was unaware of his surroundings. With palms folded and raised towards Lord Surya, his eyes closed, Karna was lost in meditation with his inner sight fixed on the Lord. He was lost to the world. Kunti went and stood behind Karna and to protect herself from the hot rays of the mid-day sun, she covered her head with the upper-garment of Karna and stood behind him like a statue.

His worship over, Karna turned back and saw a grand lady standing near him, her face covered with his upper-garment. He was taken aback.

With great tenderness, he took Kunti to the shade and seating her fell at her feet. He said: "Devi, I am Karna. You look like a lady of high birth unused to physical labour. Please tell me. Please tell me what is your wish. After my worship of Lord Surya, it is my vow that I shall give whatever is asked of me. What is it, what is your wish? Please bid me to give you your heart's desire."

Kunti was seeing her son for the first time since that fateful day when she placed the new-born baby in the wooden box and sent it across the river floating. She re-lived those moments and

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the memories of the past started flashing in her mind's eye, one after the other. She saw how with trembling hands she placed the new-born in the wooden box, how she was terrified lest somebody espied her secret and how she was trying to cover it up, with what a wrench of heart she let go the wooden box with the baby inside, her grief heightened as she could not share it with anyone else.

She remembered how she sent up prayers to the gods to look after her own child. It was as if she was leaving it to the care of the denizens of the other worlds.

'How heart-rending it was to forsake one's own child, and that too the first born! Even beasts, birds and other inferior beings take care of their offsprings. Here I am, born as a royal princess, instead of feeding the baby with my own breast milk, sending it afloat in a closed box in a river. Will the box dash against some rock and the baby become food for some watery being? Oh! Lord Varuna, waft this box gently! You are the Lord of the waves. Oh! Lord of the winds, please blow gently lest the box with the child be hurled into the endless ocean. Blow in such a way that it moves along the banks of the river and may reach

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the hands of some kind-hearted soul. Oh! my son, I have prayed to Lord Varuna and to the Lord of the wind to protect you. Some kind-hearted mother will rear you up. She will feed you with her breast milk. How unfortunate I am! How fortunate she will be!

Kunti was lost in memories of those days. Her prayers were answered and Karna got Radha as his foster-mother.

Kunti had no knowledge of what had happened to the child since that day, but having now seen Karna, she instinctively knew him to be her own son.

Karna was intently looking at Kunti to know her wish. After some moments Kunti said: "I do not know if you know who I am, but I have come to ask of you a boon."

Karna said: "Devi, I don't know who you are, but I have a feeling you are known to me. There is a persistent feeling in me that I have seen you somewhere some time. Your figure, your tears and your speech—these appear to me to be familiar. I am trying to recollect when and where I have seen you."

Suddenly Karna exclaimed: "Ah! I got it. You are the one who used to appear in my dream. Yes, you are the same one."

With a pale smile on her face, Kunti said: "Tell me all about the lady of the dream and what connection she has got with me. Who did you think she was? Why did she appear in your dream? I am tired, I shall sit here. I am not in a hurry. I want to spend some time with you."

Karna replied: "It will surprise you to know that I have not uttered a word about my dream to anyone except my mother Radha till now. But to you I shall frankly tell everything. Maybe you are aware that I am known as Radheya. My mother is Radha, but she is not my real mother. My father Adhiratha took me out from the box floating in the Ganges and he offered me to his wife Radha for being brought up. Him I call my father and Radha as my mother and I am myself known as Radheya. My anguish that my real mother forsook me immediately after birth has been unbearable. It has distressed me all through my life. Perhaps that was why this lady of the dream used to appear before me disturbing my deep sleep. Again and again I was having this dream. In the dream she used to appear as a lady of high birth. She was dressed in costly clothes and ornaments befitting a royal princess, but she used to have her face covered with the ends of her *sari*. In the dream, while I lay in deep sleep, she used to look at me with such intent eyes that they bore holes all over my

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face. Her hot tears fell on me causing burns wherever they fell. In the dream, I used to get up and ask her again and again, 'Devi, who may you be? Why are you sobbing?' Then in a choking voice she used to reply: 'I have done great injustice to you; I behaved inhumanly towards you. I wanted to make you my own, but you have gone away from me for ever. I am bemoaning my fate. I can meet you only in dream, whether your dream or my dream. This alone helps soothe the burning sensation in my heart.'

"Then she used to disappear. As years passed by, the dreams ceased. For quite some years now I have not been having the dreams. Perhaps she has given birth to more children and her pangs for me had lessened. I have a feeling that the lady of the dream was my real mother, though I don't know why she chose to sever this dream-connection even. Whoever it was, your bearing, your figure and complexion match exactly the lady of my dream. Now tell me who you are."

With head bent down, Kunti listened to this heart-rending recital by Karna. Her heart filled with compassion for the terrible ordeal through which Karna has passed. Composing herself she said: "Yes, you have realised the truth. The lady of your dreams is myself, Kunti, the mother of the Pandavas. I am the mother of you, too. You are the eldest of my children.' Karna's frame shook violently and he began to stutter: "Kunti! the mother of the Pandavas! Coming to ask for a boon from her son Radheya! Am I dreaming? The lady of my dreams is seated here.

Overwhelming emotion gripped both Karna and Kunti and they looked at each other dazed. Suddenly, they rushed into each other's arms. Karna began: "Mother, mine, at long last I have found you. I have gained you. You have no idea how much I yearned for this moment. You can't imagine how often I have dreamt of this moment. How much I have thought about you.

"In the dream I so much wanted to take off your veil and have *darshan* of your face. Mother, dear, you gave birth to me, yet all these long years you kept away from me. What agony, what mental torture you caused me by keeping aloof from me. After all, what did I want from you? Simply that I might see you and know you. Anyway, all this is now a thing of the past. You have come to me and you have accepted me as your son. The peace and happiness you have given me is inexpressible, immeasurable. Oh! the joy of this moment! It is worth all the

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trials and tribulations I have gone through."

Her eyes red with unshed tears Kunti looked long at Karna. A smile lit up Karna's face, a smile of ineffable peace. He began: "'Mother, now I know who I am —your son born of Lord Surya. Fear of shame and opprobrium forced you to leave me in a wooden box in the Ganges."

Kunti was taken aback. She said: "My son, I never thought all this was known to you. How you came to know of this secret? And when this knowledge was already in your possession, why did you not come to me instead of waiting for me to come to you?"

Karna replied: "It is only yesterday that Krishna revealed to me this secret. But what does it matter? Let us forget it. Mother, sit by me and talk to me. This joy and happiness I don't think will last long. I am eager to drink to the last drop of this cup of happiness which you have given me. Place my hands on your shoulders. Let me enjoy the love and affection which a mother alone can give. Be done with all talk. In silence, I will enjoy your nearness."

Thus was united the mother and son. Kunti got back her lost son, and Karna his unknown mother, their hearts were full with unspoken happiness. Suddenly Karna got up and said: "Mother, I am happy beyond measure that you have come. I do not know how long this happiness will last. For some moments or for some hours. But at the same time I will have to wake up from this beautiful, happy dream. Now tell me mother, why have you come?"

"Karna, you are no longer Radheya. You are Kaunteya. You are my son. Now, not five but six are my sons. My happiness is full to the brim."

Tears flowing down his cheeks, Karna spoke. "Oh! mother! why did you come and why did you make me wise about all this history? Do you know how I would love to be called myself Kaunteya? How proud I would be to call myself as your and Lord Surya's son. But, remain I will have to, as Radheya, Mother, you cannot imagine how unhappy I am at this intolerable situation. But, God's will be done. You have come to ask for something. Please let me know your commands."

Kunti was rendered speechless. Wiping her tears she said: "My son, you have undergone dishonour, ridicule and what.not. All because the world did not know that you are my son. Now the dark days are over. Not knowing that the Pandavas were your brothers you have developed hatred and enmity towards them. Now that you know the fact, it is only proper that there is no enmity between brothers. Karna.

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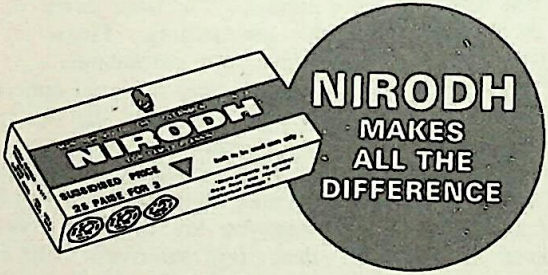


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come with me. I shall take you to the five Pandavas. You shall be the *Chakravarty*. Your brothers will honour you, respect you and serve you. You will attain happiness and blissful peace. Give up your association with the evil-minded Duryodhana and come with me. That is the prayer I wanted to ask of you."

With tears welling up in his eyes, Karna looked at Kunti. "Mother, within two days two great souls have offered me the kingship of the world and if I accept it, Yudhishtira and the Pandava brothers would serve me with affection and devotion. It is tempting indeed. Strange indeed are the ways of Fate. I had no occasion even to think about this proposal. But, mother, tell me if I accept your proposal and come with you, do you know what will be the ultimate result?"

"What? What can be the result?" Kunti said: "You all brothers will become one. Arjuna will be your servant. With the help of the Pandava brothers, you will conquer the entire world. Balarama and Krishna will give you their blessings. You will no longer be called Radheya. You will be Kaunteya, one of the Pandavas." Immediately was heard a voice from the skies. It was Lord Surya's. He said: 'Son, accept Kunti's advice.' Karna heard it, but it had no effect on him.

For a long moment, he kept on looking at his mother. He broke the silence and said: "Mother, you have no conception, no idea of how much I am angry with you. This anger was towards my unknown mother who used to appear in my dreams. It was not against you. What anguish, suffering, mental torture I underwent solely due to her! My name, my reputation, why my whole life was vitiated by her action. Thousands of questions used to arise in my mind. I so much wanted to find answers to these and find solace in my unhappy life. And you yourself can see that all this anger of mine vanished the moment I saw you, as the snow evaporates on a desert. I now hanker for your affection and love. I love Radha, but in your presence that love has become as of nothing. My heart is full of love for my brothers too. Mother's love is something priceless, something which nothing can equal. My heart is unable to contain the love which is flowing from you." Overcome with emotion, mother and son were joined in fast embrace. Lord Surya was also happy at this union of mother and son. The two remained thus for quite some time unaware of their surroundings, the world lost to them. At last Kunti said: "Now, my son, come. Let us go and meet the

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brothers." But Karna was in acute agony. In sobbing words, he said: "No, mother, no, this can't be." Kunti was struck dumb.

"Why son, why this cannot happen? What makes you hesitate? Why? Why? Why?" Karna said: "Mother, come what may, I can't leave Duryodhana. I am word-bound. mother. All these long years, I was Sutaputra and shall remain a Sutaputra hereafter too. You had given me up. There was none to side with me and honour me. Rejected by the world, repulsed by everyone, with agony in mind I had none to look up to. In that grim situation the only one who came to my rescue was Duryodhana. Drona rejected me, Bhargava cursed me. At the competition where I wanted to challenge Arjuna in archery, there too I was insulted. You were there. Were you not? You definitely would have known my identity. But you never raised your little finger in support. So I was left alone to face all this dishonour and ridicule.

"Why should we talk about the past? I don't wish to cause sorrow to you by reminding you of all that happened. Yet, the fact remains that the whole world was against me, and the only one who welcomed me was Duryodhana. To leave him now is sheer ingratitude, unrighteous and *adharma*. Mother, a storm has risen in my mind. Till this day there was none in this wide world to support me, to stand by me except Duryodhana. But now I have your love and the affection of the brothers. All this love and affection are pressing on my heart as if to break it. I shall indeed do everything to deserve the love and affection of my mother and brothers, but not by leaving Duryodhana. Duryodhana has claim over me. I owe a debt to him. This love and the succour given by Duryodhana have the first claim on me. I am bound to him with an invisible chain, although a golden one. How can I forget the noble Duryodhana! I consider it my foremost duty to stand by him. Now that you are here I will have to forget all this, but I cannot be untrue to my duty.

"Mother, my mind and my body are not my own. These I have made an offering to Duryodhana. Mother, my end is near. In these last days of mine on earth, whatever is left of my reputation and name, do you wish to be sullied? True, I and my friends are heading towards annihilation and destruction along with Duryodhana. Every one of us will die. None of the Pandavas will be touched. They have Krishna to protect them. You need have no anxiety about their safety.

"My armour which ensured immortality to me, Lord Indra

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has taken away as gift. After my worship of Lord Surya, I give away to whomsoever is the seeker whatever is asked of me. I never deny anything asked. You too have asked me something but I cannot tell you how agonising it is that I am not able to comply with it. Yet, I will not send you back empty-handed.

"I hereby take a vow that, leaving Arjuna, I shall not kill anyone of the Pandava brothers. With Arjuna I shall fight and I shall die at his hands. I am sure to be killed. You have five sons and they shall remain five. If Arjuna is killed I am there and we will be five. If I die, then also you will have five, but I know that die I will, not Arjuna.

"Mother, whatever happens you will be the mother of five. If Karna is not there, Arjuna is there and if no Arjuna, there is Karna. One of the two will remain alive. Now, mother, go and be at peace."

Kunti was sobbing all the while. Overwhelmed by sorrow, she had lost her speech. Her lips were trembling and a shiver ran through her whole body. 'Ha! I found my son and lost him too!' Her heart, already broken, was now completely shattered. Like a lightning after illuminating the atmosphere for a moment, leaves it in greater darkness. Likewise, the few hours spent with her son left her more heart-broken than before.

Karna could well imagine the agony his mother was passing through. Embracing her again warmly he said: "Mother, what is fated cannot be undone. Your tears or my tears cannot alter even in the slightest degree what has been pre-ordained by the Gods. It is futile to try to change the course of fate. God had ordained these things to happen even before you or I were born. Bless me that I may soon attain *veera swarga.* Wash off my unhappiness with your tears. Your tears will be my anointment. Your tears are more purifying for me than the waters of the Ganga. Mother, please go. Let us dream of some other dreams."

Kunti was so weak that Karna had to lift her up. Mother and son fell into a deep embrace and remained unaware of the world around them. Then slowly and reluctantly Kunti disengaged herself and started walking step by step. Karna stood like a statue looking at her till she disappeared from sight.

This heart-rending scene was witnessed by the denizens of the sky and a deep sigh went up from their hearts. □□□

*He who reigns within himself and rules passions, desires and fears is more than king.*

**Milton**

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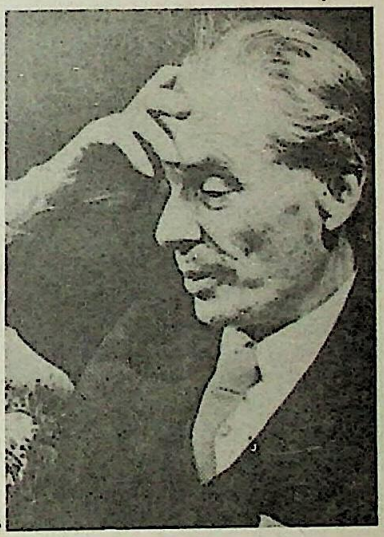
# Aldous Huxley and Mahatma Gandhi

A. V. Ashok

GANDHIJI was a saint in politics. The intriguing phenomenon of the saint in politics held a special fascination for Aldous Huxley (1894-1963).

The most penetrating study of the phenomenon of religion vis-a-vis politics is Aldous Huxley's 'Grey Eminence' (1941). 'Grey Eminence' is a biography of Francois Leclerc du Trumblay—Father Joseph (1577-1638). Father Joseph's life and work was to Huxley a useful case history to investigate into the perplexing issue of the saint in relation to politics. Father Joseph was a fervent Capuchin (a Catholic order) evangelist, "a contemplative with a considerable working knowledge of mysticism, (and) one who... had actually made some advance along the 'way of perfection' towards union with God." Yet Father Joseph deviated into



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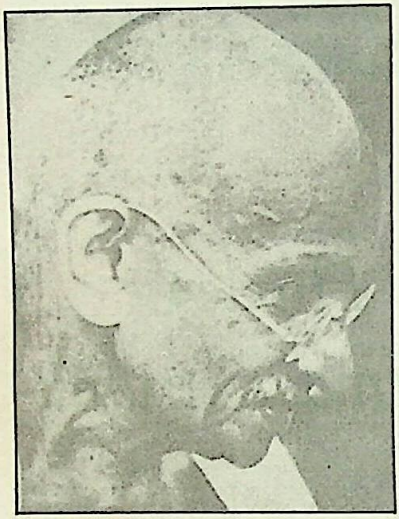

politics and became the collaborator of Cardinal Richelieu. He passionately spun policies which sought to annihilate the secessionist ambitions of the Huguenots (French Protestants) and destroy the Hapsburg quest for hegemony in Europe in order to pave the way for the supremacy of France in Europe. "The criminal follies of (Father Joseph's) high statesmanship" spread misery, famine and death. "Father Joseph believed that the cause of God and the cause of France were inseparable." Father Joseph's involvement in politics nullified his spirtiual calibre.

Huxley never reckoned politics as an endeavour that contributed to the welfare of mankind. Politics to Huxley was mostly peopled by unregenerate men "who have done little or nothing to get rid of their Old Adams." The phenomenon of a saint in politics therefore puzzled Aldous Huxley. "I become more and more firmly convinced," wrote Huxley "that it is completely pointless to work in the field of politics." "... political action," observed Huxley, "is always foredoomed to a partial, sometimes even a complete, self-stultification. The intrinsic nature of the human instruments with which, and the human materials upon which, political action must be carried out, is a positive guarantee against the possibility that such action shall yield the results that were expected from it." Huxley considered the mystic's devotion to the task of "dying to self" and realization of "the Kingdom of God within" as the only "effective method" for the improvement of the human personality. "Political reforms cannot be expected to produce much general betterment, unless large numbers of individuals undertake the transformation of their personality by the only known method which really works—that of the contemplatives." Huxley did not expect the saint to trespass into politics. He observed, "Religious people who think that they can go into politics and transform the world always end by going into politics and being transformed by the world."

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Huxley allocated the saints a pivotal sphere of life and work on the "margin" of society. He called saints "men of the margin". "... if (the saint) remains on the periphery, he can do something to mitigate the consequences of what the politicians do at the centre... Anyone who has any desire for sanctity, any gift for the knowledge of ultimate reality, can do far more good by sticking to his... activities on the margin of society than by going to the centre and trying to improve matters there." Huxley expected of the saints not participation in politics but an "antiseptic and antidotal function" to "mitigate the poisons which society generates within itself by its political and economic activities." "Saints... appear to be the only antidote to statesmen." Huxley contended that the "theocentric saints are the salt which preserves the social world from irremediable decay." Huxley admired George Fox for his strict marginal role. Fox was "fanatically marginal—for when invited, he refused even to dine at Cromwell's table for fear of being compromised."

Gandhiji was a God-bound man. He called himself "a humble seeker after truth." (To Gandhiji Truth and God were "convertible terms"). Gandhiji declared: "I am a man of faith. My reliance is solely on God." (To Gandhiji "faith" was a "living wide-awake consciousness of God within)." But politics was Gandhiji's arena of work. Gandhiji did not see any incompatibility between religion and politics. He did not consider involvement in politics as transgression from progress towards union with God: "Many of my political friends despair of me because they say that even my politics are derived from religion. And they are right. My politics and all other activities of mine are derived from my religion;" "Man's ultimate aim is the realization of God, and all his activities, political, social and religious, have to be guided by the ultimate aim of the vision of God;" "... I can say without the slightest hesitation, and yet in all humility that those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means;" "What I want to achieve, what I have been striving and pining to achieve these 30 years is self-realization, to see God face to face, to attain moksha... All that I do... and all my ventures in the political field are directed to this same end."

Gandhiji's politics consisted in preaching and demonstrating the efficacy of non-violence as an instrument of resistance to British rule in India; in galvanizing the people of India into a nation-wide movement for independence; in enunciating the

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methods by which the economy of India will be free from the evils of economic inequality and unemployment and will favour the "dumb millions" of its villages. Gandhiji's politics sought to ensure the dignity and worth of every Indian, equip him with the irreducible material wherewithal for a decent living, and prepare him for the larger possibilities of spiritual illumination.

In his slender but pertinent writings on Gandhiji, Huxley always wrote admiringly of Gandhiji. Huxley contended in 'A Note on Gandhi' (contributed to the "Memorial Section" of 'Mahatma Gandhi—Essays and Reflections' edited by S. Radhakrishnan) that Gandhiji gave "a simple and eminently sensible" solution to the problem of "what set of social, political and economic arrangements are the most appropriate" for Man who is an "amphibious being on the borderline between the animal and the spiritual." Given his passionate faith in decentralization Huxley admired Gandhiji's conception of "village republics" for India. Huxley paid rich tributes to Gandhiji's utter selflessness and total commitment to the service of humanity. The very opening line of Huxley's 'Ape and Essence' (1948; a novel which portrays the Future as Nemesis for the sins of Modern Man) alludes to Gandhiji: "It was the day of Gandhi's assassination; but on Calvary the sightseers were more interested in the contents of their picnic baskets than in the possible significance of the, after all, rather commonplace event they had turned out to witness." This observation discloses with a quaint subtlety that Huxley reckoned Gandhiji as belonging to the line of the Saviours of humanity whose destiny it is to suffer neglect by a humanity heedless of salvationary overtures.

But these were not "the whole story" of Gandhiji for Huxley. "The whole story included an inconsistency, almost a betrayal." Huxley was characteristically puzzled by Gandhiji's involvement in the "sub-human mass-madness of nationalism." None was more competent than Aldous Huxley to pronounce whether or not Gandhiji's saintliness miscarried in politics. But Huxley never concretely elucidated any conclusions on this ticklish problem as he did in the case of Father Joseph.

Both Aldous Huxley and Gandhiji had an unshakeable conviction in small cooperative communities. Gandhiji was the founder of many successful small cooperative communities—Phoenix colony, Tolstoy Farm, Sabarmati Ashram and Sevagram. Huxley consistently upheld that "small-scale societies of chosen individuals outside and on the margin of the essentially unvia-

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ble large-scale societies" are the only perfect antidote to many an ill of the *misere de l'homme*.

To both Huxley and Gandhiji, mechanised mass production was anathema. Huxley bewailed that technological progress had only favoured the system of mass production which resulted in "the centralization of a large part of the population in cities and in the reduction of ever-increasing numbers of individuals to complete dependence upon a few private capitalists and their managers, or upon the one public capitalist, the state, represented by politicians and working through civil servants." Huxley therefore concluded that the "personal liberty and political and civil rights" of the masses were to a "considerable extent dependent upon the grace of the capitalistic or national owners and managers of means of production and distribution ..." He wished technological progress had been weighted in favour of "members of a self-governing cooperative group working for subsistence and a local market" whereby the "economic self-sufficiency" and "political independence" of a large number of citizens would have been assured. Gandhiji was never opposed to mechanised mass production per se. While mass production, to Huxley, was a severe threat to liberty, Gandhiji pointed to the impracticality of opting for labour-saving mechanized mass production in a country like India bedevilled with unemployment and surplus labour. □□□

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The triumph of Flora

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# NICOLAS POUSSIN

## *The French Patron of Classicism*

V. K. SUBRAMANIAN

"MY nature constrains me to seek and to love well-ordered things, and to flee confusion, which is as much my antithesis and my enemy as light is to dark," proclaimed Nicolas Poussin, the father of French painting, the greatest French painter of the seventeenth century, and the greatest painter in the classical tradition after Raphael.

Poussin was out and out a classicist. Classicism in painting symbolises a harmonious marriage between mortal man and perennial nature. Though Poussin has been referred to as an intellectual artist, an architect on canvas, an illustrator of classical myths etc., he was essentially a worshipper of nature. But he did not neglect any of the major elements essential to great art: perspective, drawing and anatomy. "I have neglected nothing," was his proud assertion.

But critics have accused him of neglecting the "gamut of colour." There is always, among artists and art critics a controversy about the relative importance of colour and drawing. Lebrun, a contemporary and disciple of Poussin used to say: "The function of colour is to satisfy the eyes, whereas drawing satisfies the mind," a view which conformed to the classical theory and represents Poussin's approach to painting.

Poussin, it is true, did not

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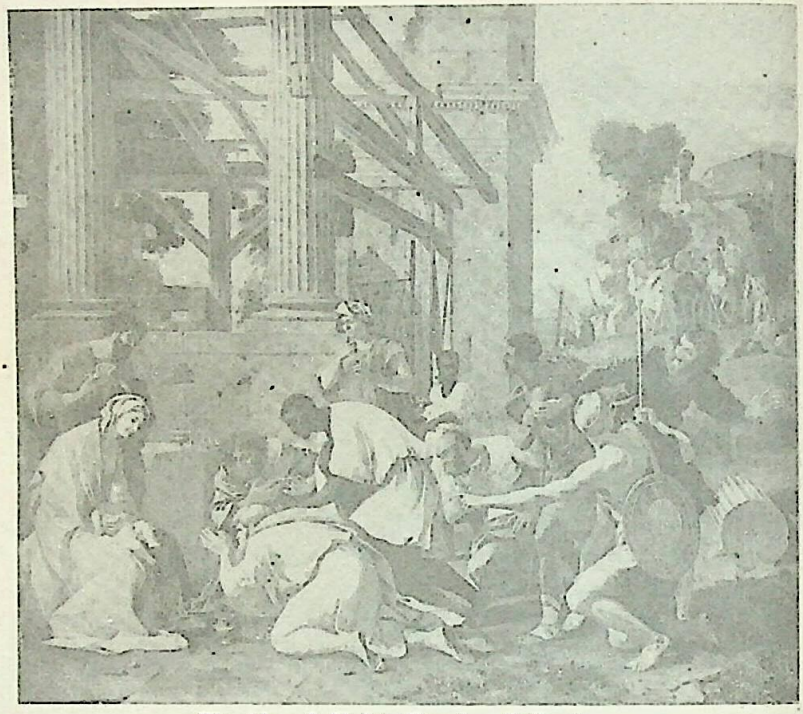

**Worship of Christ (Dresden Gallery)**

use glaring colours. For him, colour was subordinate to the totality of composition and unity of vision.

As Will Durant writes on Poussin's work: "Here is the classic conception of beauty as the harmony of parts in a whole, not the youthful idea of art as 'expression'—which might be a child's daub or a hawker's cry. Amid mannerism and baroque, and against the force and sentiment of Italian painting in the seventeenth century, Poussin clung to the classic ideal of nothing in excess: no shouting colours, no tears, no bizarreries, no theatrical contrasts of light and shade. It is a masculine art resembling Bach more than Beethoven."

Nicolas Poussin was born in 1594 in Normandy, France, the son of a Sheriff's daughter and a soldier in the French army. The parents lived tilling a farm, and the young Nicolas learned to sketch the woods and fields he loved.

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When Quentin Varin, a painter, came to decorate a Church, Nicolas watched him with interest and learnt some lessons in drawing and painting.

In 1612, at the age of 18, Nicolas went to Paris to study art. Life was a struggle in Paris, but he did not despair. A set of engravings of Raphael's paintings had a pofound influence on him. Two ideas stuck in his mind: one, that "Line, not colour was the tool of art," and second: "Rome was the birthplace of all true art," and he decided that somehow he must go to Rome.

Despite his best efforts, young Nicolas could reach Rome only in 1624. In Rome he was introduced to Cardinal Barberini, through the good offices of Marino, the Italian poet who had noticed Poussin's work in Paris. Gradually Poussin began to execute various commissions. In 1630, he married and spent the next 10 years in domestic bliss.

In 1640, Cardinal Richelieu ordered him to return to Paris and paint pictures in the Louvre. He went but returned to Rome in 1643, unable to tolerate the jealous competition among Parisian artists. He settled down in Rome and remained there, contented and happy, till his death on November 19, 1665, at the age of 71.

All the major galleries of the world possess Poussin's works. But the most important collections are in Louvre, Paris, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Ermitage Gallery, Leningrad, Dresden Gallery, East Germany and National Galleries, London and Washington.

His outstanding works include: *The Arcadian Shepherds* and *Self-Portrait* (in the Louvre, Paris), *The Rape of the Sabine Women* (in the Metropolitan Museum, New York), *The Triumph of Flora* and *The Worship of Christ* (in the Dresden Gallery), and *Tankred and Erminia* (in the Ermitage, Leningrad).

Poussin revelled in mythological subjects. The two outstanding works in this genre are: *The Funeral of Phocion* and *Orpheus and Eurydice* (both in Louvre).

**Self Portrait by Nicolas Poussin**

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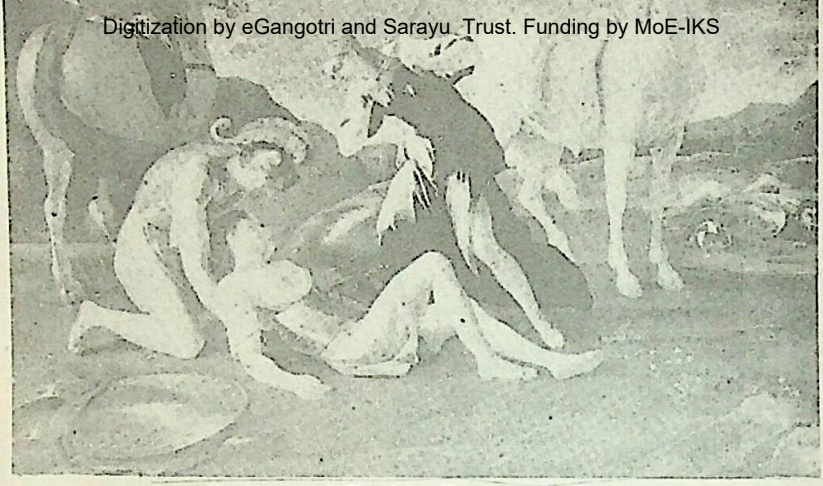

**Tankred and Erminia (Ermitage Gallery)**

Poussin has bequeathed to posterity 342 paintings and 1300 drawings (some of which are in Windsor Castle).

All his paintings dealing with mythological subjects have a sculpturesque quality. As one critic has said: "He alone knew how to manifest the inward emotions of his mythical people in outward, physical postures."

Poussin's biblical paintings are not very remarkable, though some of them have been executed with precision and purity. Mention may be made of *The Holy Family* (in the National Gallery of Ireland).

Though a Frenchman, Poussin loved Rome and its ruins, passionately as his own. There is a story about his meeting with a tourist, who wanted to take home some rarity to remind him of Rome. Poussin picked up a handful of earth mixed with fragments of porphyry and marble and told the visitor: "Here, Signore, take this to your museum, and say this is ancient Rome."

The tradition of landscape painting introduced by Poussin's work showed the way to many painters, starting with Claude Lorrain (Poussin's neighbour and friend) and ending with Ruisdale, Corot and Cezanne.

A disciplined approach to painting, mastery of drawing and perspective and an innate love for classical antiquity represented by his beloved Rome, a perfect knowledge of human anatomy and an unerring eye for composition combined with his worship of nature's Panorama, make the paintings of Nicolas Poussin not only the pride and glory of France but a precious legacy of all mankind. □□□

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# DIKSHITHAR

## *the composer par excellence*

K. MUTHUKUMAR

*The author who is presently the Joint Director of Commercial Audit, Bombay, is the great-grandson of Subbarama Dikshithar.*

*After taking his B.A. (Hons.) degree in Economics from the Madras University he joined the Indian Audits and Accounts Service. He has served as Under Secretary in the Ministry of Defence and as Deputy Secretary in the Department of Atomic Energy.*

IN the catena of Carnatic music literature, Muthuswamy Dikshithar's compositions have a distinguished place. Lilting and lofty, his compositions delineate in realms of rapturous musical ecstasy. Lovers of Sanskrit will find particularly in Dikshithar's kritis (compositions) the exotic beauty of the language. His exemplary 'pada prayoga', i.e. choice of words and his unremitting attention to 'prasa', i.e. alliteration, lend charm to his compositions which have profound intellectual appeal.

Music was the life-blood of the trinities of Carnatic Music, namely, Tyagaraja, Dikshithar and Shyama Sastry. 'Nadopasana' was practised and perfected as 'yoga' to attain self-realisation. For Dikshithar, music that was dedicated to the Almighty, was the medium through which he explored the various mythological conceptions of the Godheads in various forms like Ganesa, Subramanya, Kamalamba, Avalamba, Tyagaraja, Rama, Krishna and so on. There is no recorded evidence of the number of authentic kritis of Dikshithar. Nevertheless, from the variety

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वेदोऽखिलो धर्ममूलम् । धर्मो रक्षति रक्षितः ॥

Dear Friend,

As you are aware, India is commanding the reputation of all the countries of the World by its spiritual glory and heritage in the Vedas and Shastras. With great respects to our Holiness Shri Kanchi Kamakoti Periyaval, there is an awakening in the public and more and more students are coming forward to study the Vedas, as a result of the encouragement given by Him. But we are sorry to state that the Vedic Text books are not available in the market (for their use) and are said to be out of print.

With the directions and blessings of His Holiness, we have taken up the work of printing the Rig Veda Text Book in Nagari Script, as the first project. The cost of printing 1,000 copies comes to Rs. 70,000/-. Counting upon the support of all Vedic Lovers, the work has been entrusted for printing after giving an advance and the work is expected to be completed in about three months.

Though this Samithi has embarked upon this costly project, it will not be in a position to meet this full expenditure without your valuable financial assistance. We therefore appeal to you, to join in this noble cause by sending a liberal donation and help us to bring out the Vedic Books, one after another. You can speak to your relatives and friends also and request them to extend their support to this Vedic cause. The donations may be sent to the President & Treasurer.

May Veda Matha bless you all with long life and prosperity.

वेदाः । वयं वः शरणं प्रपन्नाः ।

Yours faithfully
V R L Sarma
President & Treasurer

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of his compositions, one cannot but marvel at Dikshithar's catholicity of outlook. He invokes the blessings of the Gods in all forms. For him, Bhakti in musical form towards any Deity he came across during his journeys through the length and breadth of this country, was all that mattered, because he saw the Supreme Brahman in every Godhead and every Godhead as an indistinguishable part of the Brahman. His 16 songs on "Shodasa Ganapatis," his "Navavarnas (groups of nine songs)" an Goddesses "Kamalamba" and "Avayamba" and on Rama and Krishna and his "Panchalingasthala Kritis" on Lord Shiva are examples of his ardent devotion to the Gods through music. His expansive knowledge in "Tantra," "Mantra" and "Jyotisha" shastras is fully evident in a number of compositions. It is indeed surprising that he, though a saint, shows normal human apprehensions about the malefic efforts of planets like Saturn on human life. In his excellent kriti on Saturn, "दिवाकर तनुजम्" he first describes him as

'काल दण्ड पारपीडित जानु'।

Perhaps he feared that this could be an uncharitable description of "Sani" as being worse than "Yama" in his punishing ways and quickly corrected himself and showered praise on Him in the next sentence as "कमितार्थफलत कामधेनु", i.e. "Sani" in His infinite mercy can match the Divine Cow, Kamadhenu.

Numerous illustrations can be cited to point out his deep knowledge of Vedas, *shastras* and above all, his meticulous attention to details while describing the Gods and Goddesses in his compositions.

In "Kamalambika" in Todi Raga, he speaks of "अगचटतप आदि वर्णे the import of which is understood only by "Devi Upasakas." Then again in his famous "Navagraha" composition on "Sukra," he describes how he confers various "yogas" on the native: द्विराशि, शष्ठंश, ऐरावतांश, पारिजातांश, गोपुरांश। राजयोगकारक राजप्रथम्॥ The classic example of his mastery in "prasa" is evident in his famous composition in "Sankarabharanam" where he describes Lord Shiva thus

'दक्ष शिक्षण दक्ष दरसुर
लक्षण विधिलक्षण लक्ष्य।
दक्षण बहू विशक्षण सुधा॥
बक्षण गुरू कठाक्ष वीक्षणा।
अक्षय लिंग विभो॥

Connoisseurs of Dikshithar's compositions can give more instances to illustrate the greatness of Dikshithar and his compositions. Dikshithar's travels in North India gave him an op-

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portunity to learn the Hindustani Classical Music and in his compositions in rāgas such as "Dwajawanthi," and "Hussani," one could see how he had skilfully blended the Carnatic and Hindustani styles in the most resplendent way.

It is however a matter for regret that even today, in the average musician's repertoire, Dikshithar's compositions get a low rating in content. This is partly attributable to the misleading impression about the compositions, namely, their supposed difficulty in rendering and mastery. The non-availability of authoritative texts of these compositions is also another reason. The famous "Sangeeta Sampradaya Pradarshini" of Shri Subbarama Dikshithar, the illustrious grandson of the illustrious composer, has not been reprinted. The compositions under circulation are the ones published by some of the disciples of Shri Ambi Dikshithar, son of Shri Subbarama Dikshithar.

Prof. Ranga Ramanuja Iyengar, in his "Kritimanimala" has compiled a number of compositions collected from different sources.

Efforts should therefore be made by Carnatic Musicians, musicologists and patrons of music for the reprints of "Sangeeta Sampradaya Pradarshini" (in Telugu) and its translation in Tamil or Sanskrit. Dikshithar's compositions are so rich in meaning and devotion that it is said, that even bereft of the musical part of them, they are worthy of recital as any other religious text or "Sthothras."

I cannot help recalling the services of late Shri T. L. Venkata Rama Iyer, Judge of Supreme Court, Smt. D. K. Pattammal and late Shri Madurai Mani Iyer for the popularisation of Dikshithar's compositions.

Dikshithar's famous "Veena" which he got from the Ganga as a result of his *Mantra Siddhi*, and the idols he worshipped are still in the personal custody of Shri Baluswamy Dikshithar of Madras, the grandson of Subbarama Dikshithar.

Thanks to the efforts of some devotees, the bicentenary of Dikshithar's birthday was celebrated some years ago, with some eclat and the Government of India was also persuaded to release a postal stamp on this occasion. The first day postal cover was released under the auspices of the Madras Music Academy and was presented to Shri Baluswamy Dikshithar.

*But the best way to perpetuate the memory of this illustrious composer is to organise Dikshithar's "Aradhana" in the same style as "Tyagaraja Aradhana,"*

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*either at Tiruvarur, his birth-place; or at Tiruttani, where he had enlightenment.*

The "Pancharatna Kirtanas" of Saint Tyagaraja are of matchless charm and are sung in chorus by musicians and all music lovers on the Aradhana day at Thiruvaiyaru. Similarly, five of Dikshithar's compositions could be selected for rendering in such annual Aradhanas of Dikshithar. Should a difficulty arise in selection, the guidance of His Holiness Sankaracharya of Kanchi Kamakotipeetham, who shows abiding interest in Dikshithar's *kritis*, can be sought for. What is needed today to accomplish this task is a band of right people with dedication to Dikshithar and to his rich compositions. It is never too late to begin in this direction.

□□□

*By mechanical means, in modern times, an image is now fixed on a photographic plate in a few seconds—an image more precise and exact than it is humanly possible to draw —and so with the advent of photography disappeared the necessity for exact reproduction in art.*

*—Henri Matisse*


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# THOUGHT FOR THE FORTNIGHT

## The Way to Happiness

SAVITRIBAI KHANOLKAR

IF you dissipate electric current in too many appliances, factories and lights, the voltage will be reduced. When a canal discharges water into several outlets, water will be greatly reduced. This is but common sense.

The potential of any energy plant remains the same. The less divergent the output, the more the availability to its users.

This is exactly the case with mind-power. Dissipate its potential and you are left with nothing. Your varied attachment ties are like so many wasteful outlets.

If you are sincere in your search for Truth, you can overcome such obstacles. The remedy is to snap the ties before the knots grow unmanageable. It does not mean to leave everything and resort to the wilderness. Far from it. People call it maturing or taking things in better perspective, but what I suggest is much more than that.

The EGO is what hurts at the slightest provocation. So, stop feeling bad about what others say about you. Listen to criticism and mend your ways, leaving false accusations alone. You should report to God alone as your Mentor and Friend. Detach yourself from too deep involvement in things of the world.

We should sever the strings tying us to worldly affairs. A balloon tied down to earth on every side remains earth-bound until all the ropes are cut to the last and then it soars into the wide spaces. Even so, we too soar up when our bondages are cut asunder.

Whatever your worldly needs be, let them not eat away into your heart. Let God steer you the right way. Be passive in His hand and feel soon refreshed and new as a young child in its mother's care.

A boat that remains anchored to the shore with several chains cannot depart on its journey, no matter how hard you row.

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## *JUST RELEASED !*

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Swami Ramdas did not belong to any particular creed. He firmly believed that all creeds, faiths and religions are but different paths ultimately converging on the same goal. The large number of events chronicled in this Gospel of his life will bear full testimony to this.

The incidents and the conversations were recorded on the days of their occurrences by the learned author, himself an inmate of the Anandashram for the past 30 years and at present the Managing Trustee thereof.

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# YOGA FOR WOMEN

GEETA IYENGAR

"ALL men are created equal" so runs the adage, but most males prefer to believe themselves more 'equal' than women.

Certain spheres of human activity are felt to be exclusively male, and the unwary female who ventures into such fields is regarded with attitudes that range from tolerant amusement to cynical scepticism. For a long time, especially in India, the field of personal development—whether intellectual or physical—was barred to women. Gradually, however, these barriers are breaking down and it is with relief that one notes the entrance of women into the educational fields.

Although India is the classical land of Yoga, a belief seems to have gained ground that Yoga is not for women. Women, it is argued, do not have the requisite stamina for it. They are occupied with hundreds of household chores, they even breathe differently!

Imagine a woman standing on her head with her two-year old child pulling at her hair! Women were supposed to leave this field of spiritual and physical development strictly to the superior male.

Historically, however, Yoga has had a number of women adherents in the past. In fact the first disciple of Lord Siva in this sacred art was his wife Parvati.

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The sage Yajnavalkya instructed his wife Maitreyi in Vedic times in Yoga.

The great epic *Ramayana* tells us that when Rama was banished by his father at the instance of Kaikeyi, his step-mother, he asked his own mother Kausalya for her blessing before going into exile and she did so after becoming tranquil in mind through yoga. As is natural for a mother on such occasions, she was emotionally upset and refused to bless him till she had calmed herself with the practice of *asanas* and *pranayama*. Then she blessed him with a pure mind and a pure heart.

Yogic exercises in particular are not only very helpful to women but also extremely convenient. Whereas the normal run of games and exercises develop only certain parts of the body, yogic exercises develop all parts and at the same time have a definite effect on the mind, emotions and inner self.

Again not every woman can go to the club or sports ground to exercise her body. She is very often kept at home either by social convention or household work especially by small children.

Indian women feel shy to exercise themselves in public, Yoga is a convenient form of exercise for women because it requires only a small even surface, fresh air and a blanket, which every house will certainly have.

Yogic exercises are useful to women and seem also specially invented for their use. The female body is more supple, soft and tender than that of the male due to the presence of different hormones.

Menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth and lactation all influence her bodily development in the line of softness and passivity. But this pliability and suppleness have also their reverse mental side.

On the physical side the female body inclines very rapidly to obesity, fat deposits accumulate around the waist and abdomen especially after child-birth. Difficulties in the menstrual cycle such as overflow or irregularity in the flow are also experienced by a number of women, which leaves them nervous and irritable. Pregnancy and child-birth are for many a trying period both for physical reasons as well as because of old wives' tales about the difficulties of child-birth.

Most women also experience mental and emotional crises at the time of menopause, while the building of varicose veins seems to be almost a normal occurrence in females. Constipation also is another plague of women.

All these physical, emotional and mental disorders can be rectified by making use of a gift

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given by nature to woman—her flexibility of body—through yogic exercises.

Yogic *asanas* make the body not only supple but strong, strengthen the nerves and ligaments, purify the blood and skin, tone up the internal organs and give general health, agility, balance, endurance and vitality. Mentally and emotionally yogic exercises—*asanas* and *pranayama*—improve mental equilibrium, calm emotional disturbances and give an even and balanced personality.

Although Yoga can be begun at any age, the best period for women to begin its practice is at the start of menstruation in puberty. Physical and emotional development at puberty, as well as purification of the blood, are aided by the correct performance of yogic exercises at that period. Balance is given to the growing girl both in her deportment and in her physical appearance and the stress and strain of puberty is minimised.

In general women should avoid the practice of *asanas*, especially the inverted poses like *Sirsasana* (Head-stand) *Sarvangasana* (Shoulder-stand) during the menstrual period for about three or four days. *Pranayama* (breathing exercises) and *Savasana* (relaxation) should be kept up.

Relief can be got from pain in the back and abdomen during menstruation with the help of *Uttanasana*, *Paschimottanasana*, *Baddhakonasana* and *Upavistakonasana*.

During pregnancy the *asanas* listed below in the daily practice can be done regularly for the first three months. *Baddhakonasana* and *Upavistakonasana* should be done throughout the period of pregnancy.

It will interest readers to know that exercises mentioned in Dr. Dick Read's book—*Childbirth Without Fear* are very similar to these two exercises. The practice of *Pranayama* and *Savasana* (relaxation) should be kept up as they are great helps during delivery.

Other rules apply both to men and woman, such as performing the exercise on an empty stomach (for example four hours should elapse after a heavy meal, two hours after a light one made up of, let us say, biscuits and tea), eating half an hour after exercising, not bathing immediately before and after exercise.

While any time is suitable, provided the stomach is empty, the early morning hours are more suitable for the practice of *Pranayama* (breathing techniques) while late afternoon or early evening would be good for doing *asanas*. Some women are afraid that the practice of Yoga will turn them into muscular amazons without any feminine grace or charm. Yogic exercises, however, develop more the nerves,

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ligaments and internal organs. They help the blood circulation, give inner poise and outward body balance and strengthen each part so that the figure is properly proportioned. They enhance feminine beauty, not diminish it.

Due to increased blood circulation, the skin is no longer dry and rough, but soft and velvety. The voice becomes more melodious and pleasing. The eyes get on added sparkle, breath is purified and sweetened. The entire personality has added grace, charm and a deeper spiritual presence.

The woman who practises Yoga does not need cosmetics, stays, excessive scent and other things to enhance her beauty. As the Bible says, 'her beauty is from within'—something that cannot be rubbed off with soap and warm water.

Women are often heard to remark that ceasing practice will mean that excessive fat layers will develop on them. This again is not true. Yogic exercises are organic also and not simply muscular and no fat deposits result from stopping them.

However, once the inner yogic fire has been kindled, very few are willing to give up exercises which they know to be not only beneficial and soothing but also very pleasant to perform.

I give below a series if exercises to be performed daily.

1. *Sirsasana*—
   Pure blood supply to brain cells: Relieves colds, coughs, and palpitation.
2. *Sarvangasana*—
   Healthy blood supply to neck and chest: Relieves breathlessness, asthma, throat ailments, nervous breakdown, insomnia, and has soothing effect on nerves.
3. *Halasana*—
   Relieves high blood pressure, backache, arthritis, and lumbago.
4. *Paschimottanasana*—
   Tones up the abdominal organs and takes off their sluggishness, improvse digestion, tones the kidneys and rejuvenates the whole spine.
5. *Upavistakonasana*—
   Regulates menstrual flow, stimulates ovaries, prevents hernia, relieves sciatic pain.
6. *Baddhakonasana*—
   Checks irregular menstrual periods, tones kidneys and urinary bladder, relieves pain during delivery.
7. *Ardhamatsyendrasana*—
   Relieves back-ache, hip-pain, sluggishness of liver and spleen, tones intestines.
8. *Adhomukha-svanasana*—
   Relieves back-ache, sluggishness of liver and tones intestines. □□□

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# Need for Modern Research on Household Remedies

DR. ASHOK B. VAIDYA

IN the past, several family recipes have contributed effective drugs to the practice of medicine and more such discoveries await the modern pharmacologists of India.

For example, William Withering, the discoverer of digitalis, tells how he came to use foxglove, as follows: ::In the year 1775, my opinion was asked concerning a family recipe for the cure of dropsy. I was told that it had long been kept a secret by an old woman in Shropshire, who had sometimes made cure after the more regular practitioners had failed. I was informed also, that the effects produced were violent vomiting and purging; for the diuretic effects seem to have been overlooked. This medicine was composed of 20 or more different herbs; but it was not very difficult for one conversant in these subjects to perceive that the active herb could be no other than the foxglove."

Digitalis and its active ingredients are very important drugs for the treatment of heart failure. A secret of an old woman was leaked out to a scientist and as a consequence millions of patients all over the world have benefited with the drug over the last two centuries.

The story also emphasizes that it is desirable to divulge such secret home remedies to competent scientists so that new drugs can be developed for the relief of human suffering.

Many colourful stories exist about the discovery of cinchona bark—the source of quinine. In 1638, the bark of what the natives of Peru called "the fever tree" was used to treat countess Anna del Chinchon, wife of the Viceroy to Peru, and that her miraculous recovery led to the export of cinchona into Spain in 1639, for the treatment of malaria. The Jesuit fathers were the main importers of the bark.

The popularity of cinchona bark was viewed with disdain by the contemporary medical practitioners because its use was not

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described in Galen's authoritative text books. But the success story of quinine and other chemical analogues is a well-known history.

The moral is that the ready disdain of the biased practitioners may unnecessarily delay the active research on the native medicinal use of indigenous plants.

For example, In India, there are several plants popular for the treatment of 'jaundice' but proper research has been initiated only recently. After adequate scientific work, modern medical practitioners will readily accept the drugs whose efficacy is proved.

For the treatment of minor illnesses, many Indians still resort to household remedies or Grandma's recipes. In a preface to a book on "Household Remedies" written by Swami Shivananda, the late Rajkumari Amritkaur has said, "In most of the families there are women who store herbs and plants for different diseases. But they maintain a secrecy about the remedies..... Remedial measures which can be useful, in daily life should be divulged and studied scientifically. The knowledge gained can be applied for the primary health care."

Swami Shivananda, in his book, has covered interesting uses of 40 readily-available plants, herbs, spices and kitchen ingredients. Our scientific age demands that we conduct clinical research on such household remedies and incorporate the proven methods and discard superstitions.

It is very essential that efforts in this direction are made as early as possible. Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, under its project "Ancient Insights and Modern Discoveries," has started a survey of household remedies.

The information obtained will be analyzed critically and several research projects can be planned based on new leads. It is also considered that the information gained from the survey can be presented in a simple manner for providing a concise booklet on household remedies for the common ailments. This entire endeavour is actually to make people partners in research.

The traditional wisdom of our people in health matters may contribute novel approaches for research in modern medicine. We invite the help and cooperation of people for this national effort to conduct scientific research on Grandma's remedies and simple plant recipes. The questionnaire for the survey has invoked a widespread interest all over India.

The questionnaire can be obtained from the Department AIMD, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Chowpatty, Bombay-7.

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**Prof. Mahesh Mehta speaking on "The Concept of Social Action" at a function in Nagpur.**

## HINDUISM IS NOT INDIVIDUALISTIC

THE western belief that Hinduism and Buddhism advocate a life divorced from social participation is based on wrong assumptions, stated Prof. Mahesh Mehta, Department of Asian Studies, University of Windsor, Canada.

He was speaking on "The Concept of Social Action" at a function organised by the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan in collaboration with the Viswa Punar Nirman Sangh, Nagpur on July 22, 1979.

Pointing out that Hindus and Buddhists of ancient India never sought spiritual upliftment as a strictly individual achievement to be gained in seclusion, Prof. Mehta said that the western belief, if at all, arose from the publicised lives of certain yogis who led individualistic lives and pursued Nirvana.

The spiritual pursuit followed by Indians was always socially-oriented and, more correctly, in the Hindu way of thinking all actions for spiritual upliftment had a social bearing. Buddhism which preaches infinite campassion was in fact more relevant to today's ruthlessly competitive world, where every individual is constrained to withdraw into his own shell and protect his own interests. he pointed out.

Both Hinduism and Buddhism abhor laziness and inactivity.

The function concluded with a lively discussion followed by a slide show.

# NOTES & NEWS

## INSIGHT INTO INDIAN RELIGION AND CULTURE

A PROJECT to provide medical and educational facilities for workers at

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a tea estate near Darjeeling and to give young British volunteers an insight into Indian religion and culture will be launched in September.

The project is the brainchild of 18-year-old Bharat Dube whose father owns the tea estate near Darjeeling.

With fellow-students at the Atlantic International College in South Wales, he decided to set up the project as part of the international activities of the College.

Miss Jackie Smalldridge of Bristol and Andrew Kenyon are due at the tea estate in September to launch the pilot scheme and next year more students, also paying their own air fare, will be arriving to help the tea workers and to gain insight into Indian religion, culture and philosophy.

Miss Smalldridge, a medical student, will be in India for one year and will be reporting back regularly to the network of ex-students, sponsors and British companies supporting the project. After the completion of her medical studies she hopes to return to work in India.

## NEW ACADEMIC SESSION INAUGURATED

IMPROVED mass communication would help hasten the creation of much-needed scientific outlook among the people, felt Shri K. C. Abraham, Governor of Andhra Pradesh.

He was inaugurating the new academic session of the Bhavan's College of Mass Communication and Management, Hyderabad.

Pointing out that constant interpretation of scientific values to the people at large was vital to accelerate the pace of progress, the Governor stressed the need for ensuring regular dissemination of information.

Since at times even educated people would resist changes as they were more prone to tradition, the

**Shri K. C. Abraham, Governor of Andhra Pradesh, inaugurating the academic session of Bhavan's College of Mass Communication and Management, Hyderabad. To his left is Principal V. H. Desai, and to his right is Dr. P. Shiva Reddy, Kendra Hon. Secretary.**

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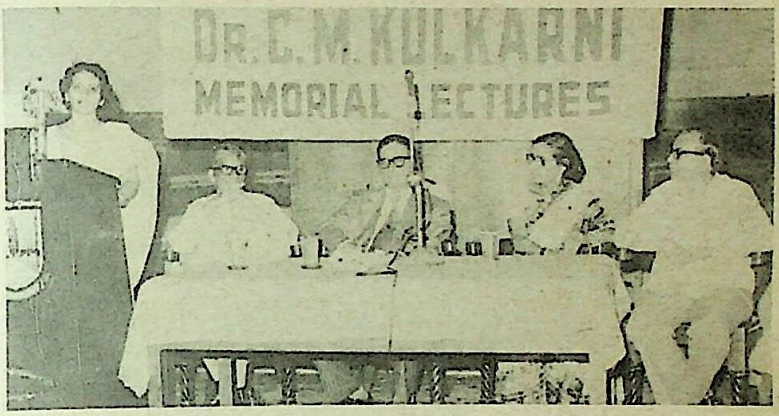


**Prof. Mary Thomas, Secretary, Dr. C. M. Kulkarni Memorial Fund Collection Committee, speaking at Dr. Kulkarni's first death anniversary function held in Bombay recently. Seated (L to R) Prof. K. T. Pandurang, Prof. Ram Joshi, Dr. Mani Kamerkar and Principal N. J. Hingorani.**

dissemination of scientific knowledge through media of mass communication had to be accelerated in order to dispel superstitions and dogma. Shri Abraham added that the communication technology should tackle the problems of food, agriculture, education, health and sanitation on the rural front for the all-round development of rural communities.

Shri V. H. Desai, Principal of the College, stated that with the completion of the new Bhavan's complex, more diploma courses would be introduced to meet the educational needs of the society.

The college which conducts one-year diploma courses in Journalism, Public Relations, Marketing and Sales Management, Business Management, Business Administration and Industrial Relations and Personnel Management has a strength of 250 students this year.

Miss Mrinalini Chattopadhyaya who proposed a vote of thanks appealed for funds for the speedy completion of the new complex.

## Dr. C. M. KULKARNI MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

INTENDING contributors to Dr. C. M. Kulkarni Memorial Scholarship (of which a write-up appeared in the July 29 issue of the **Bhavan's Journal**) may send crossed cheques or drafts in the name of the Dr. C. M. Kulkarni Memorial Fund to Shri N. J. Hingorani, National College, Bandra West, Bombay-400 050.

## SANSKRIT DAY CELEBRATIONS

A LIVELY discussion on the potent power of sound was the highlight of the Sanskrit Day Celebrations organised by the Bhavan's Mumbadevi Sanskrit Mahavidyalaya on August 9.

Pt. Ramashankar Tripathi, Pt. Umashankar Upadhyaya and Pt. Manchkaram Shastri presented the viewpoints of Alankarikas, Gram-

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marians and Naiyayikas in a lucid and enlightening manner.

The function which commenced with the recitation of Vedamantras by the students of the Mahavidyalaya was presided over by Principal Acharya Bhaishankar Purohit who stressed the utility of such traditional methods of discussion.

## ANNUAL DAY CELEBRATED

THE annual day of the Raja Veda Kavya Patasala, Kumbakonam, was celebrated in a grand manner on June 8, 1979 under the distinguished presidentship of Shri R. Natarajan, I.A.S., Member, Board of Revenue, Madras.

In his presidential address Shri Natarajan dwelt on the great administrative qualities of Sri Maharaja Saheb Sri Govinda Deekshithar, the founder of the Patasala, and his proficiency in the Vedas, Shastras and Sanskrit.

He gave away the certificate with the title **Veda Praveena** and a cash award of Rs. 1500/- to Chi. Durganandan who had completed the course of Adyayana in the Yajur Veda.

Earlier in his welcome speech Shri V. R. L. Sarma, Chairman of the Managing Committee spoke about the importance of Vedic studies and appealed to the public for their support and patronage.

The Vidyarthis of the Patasala rendered Veda Swasthi Vachanam in Rig, Yaju and Sama Vedas and Shri K. S. Vaidyanathan read the annual report of the Patasala.

Shri R. Jayaraman, Shri N. Sethuraman and Shri Govinda Deekshithar also spoke on the occasion.

The function came to a close with the recitation of the Veda Mangala Susanam by the Vidyarthis. Shri M. K. Venkatarama Sastrigal, Kavya Teacher of the Patasala, proposed a vote of thanks.

*JUST RELEASED !*

# NARAYANA GURU

*by* M. K. SANOO

Price : Rs. 18.00

This is a biography of Narayana Guru who was a Rishi in the ancient Indian tradition. His philosophy was firmly rooted in Shri Sankara's Advaita. The author has made an earnest effort to present the personality of the Guru in its totality in a style that is at once clear and readable. After visiting Narayana Guru, Rabindranath Tagore said: "I have never seen one who is spiritually greater than Swami Narayana Guru..... I shall never forget that radiant face illumined by the self-effulgent light of divine glory and those mystic eyes fixing their gaze on a far remote point in the distant horizon."

This book will be of considerable value for both spiritual men and laymen.

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# BOOK REVIEW

## ENGLISH

**INDIAN MUSICAL TRADITIONS.** By Vamanrao H. Deshpande. Published by Popular Prakashan, Bombay. Translated by S. H. Deshpande. 97 pages. Price: Rs. 25.00.

THE "Gharana" system is a unique and vital feature of Hindustani Music. Whatever is considered of high value, and whatever has contributed to its development, it has all grown under the aegis of the Gharanas. And yet, no book had been written about this important subject until Popular Prakashan, Bombay, published this interesting and valuable book by Sri Vamanrao Deshpande. The Foreword by the experienced and well-known musician and musicologist, Prof. B. R. Deodhar, whets one's appetite to read this book. Dedicated to the versatile Govindrao Tembe, the book contains 41 precious (though small) photographs of great maestroes of the past. The book concentrates on the main gharanas of vocal music.

Although a successful Chartered Accountant by profession, Vamanrao Deshpande has undergone years of rigorous training like a professional under many eminent gurus like Sureshbabu Mane, Hirabai Barodekar, Govindrao Tembe, Nathan Khan and Moghubai Kurdikar. Because of this rich practical training and his firm theoretical grounding, Vamanrao is eminently qualified and well-equipped to write an analytical book of this kind.

In the opening chapter, the author enumerates the leading characteristics of gharanas. A gharana needs continuity of at least three generations. Each gharana takes its origin from the quality of the voice of the founder, and each gharana has an artistic discipline of its own. Unless a gharana goes on assimilating ever-new musical ideas with each new artiste, while keeping true to its basic tradition, it is apt to stagnate. Gharanas are not schools; they are more sectarian in their attitude, and, on the whole, are more akin to families of blood-relations because of the rather marked "family-pride" that they exhibit.

The third chapter deals with concepts of restraint and purity which characterize classical music. Emotions which music conveys transcend literary expression; they reach out to comprehend the entire universe of human sensibility. The next chapter deals with the aesthetic principles common to all gharanas.

The fifth chapter is devoted to the two aesthetically opposite ideologies of two leading gharanas, namely the alap-and-swara-oriented KIRANA style, and the laya-oriented AGRA style. The writer's supreme admiration for the JAIPUR or ALLADIYA Gharana runs through the entire

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book. He calls it "the gharana of the golden mean". According to him, Jaipur is the one gharana that has devoted conscious thought to the achievement of a fusion of Swara and Laya. Gwalior gharana is "the fountainhead of all gharanas", but Jaipur gharana is 'the musical bank for musicians.'

The author cannot help admiring the perfectly enthralling and faultless voice of Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan, but he deplores what he calls "the spectacularism and catchy theatricalism" which "marred the integrity of Bade Ghulam Ali Khan's performances!'

However, Vamanrao is all admiration for Ustad Amir Khan's austere, artistic sincerity which kept him "strictly uncontaminated by the present craze for showiness" and for tricks to dazzle listeners. In the ninth chapter, Shri Deshpande once again tries to justify his passion for the Jaipur gharana, and he extols its many good points. He says: "I have assigned the highest place to this gharana which, while achieving fusion, also achieved subtlety of internal design. It is in this style that we meet "a fusion of emotion and intellect; it is the style that is neither overtly intellectual, nor overtly sentimental; it is the style that has struck the golden mean and achieved greatness."

Not all readers may agree with Vamanrao's views, as each gharana has its fanatical followers and virulent critics. As he himself confesses: "Normally, passion always enters the discussions on the relative merits of gharanas. Each musician is inclined to see in the style of his own gharana the acme of excellence. Thus a discussion of gharanas is likely to hurt the susceptibilities of many people."

Anyway, every gharana has its own limitations. If one wishes to enrich one's style, one must cross the boundaries of the gharanas, "stroll in many gardens, absorb many fresh scents and colours." One must develop one's distinctive style (while firmly rooted in one's favourite gharana) through an amalgam of qualities and influences from many other styles.

Although there is still room for the sprouting of many more gharanas (by the fusion of existing ones), the most strategic positions have already been occupied. Today the atmosphere on the whole appears to be inimical to the survival of our musical traditions. A "truly cataclysmic transformation is taking place" which bewilders and frightens many thinking people who understand the real values of Indian music.

The book is in very readable print, and it concludes with a list of Long Playing and Extended Playing Discs by the leading vocalists of recent times. A welcome addition to every music library of books.

—**Smt. Susheela Misra.**

**A PATTERN OF LIFE.** The Memoirs of an Indian Woman by Shudha Mazumdar published by Manohar Book Service, New Delhi, 1977. Pages 246. Rs. 45/-.

THE Memoirs of Shudha Mazumdar, dedicated in devotion to Bhagawan Sri Satya Sai Baba is a highly individualistic and interesting saga of social change in India. The period covered in the book is the first three decades of the present century when Indian women, under the dynamic leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and other national stalwarts, started radiating out of the gloom that encircled them.

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The emergence of the new nationalistic spirit pulled our women out of the mire of inertia and ignorance, silence and servitude. Gandhiji projected a new India into a new orbit. The conflict of ideals and ideologies and the clash of loyalties proved creative and A PATTERN OF LIFE IN INDIA is a portrait of this creativity and its many-sided splendour.

Shudha's father, a wealthy landowner, Tara Pada Ghose was, as many an Indian of his day, Western in thought, word and deed. But the women in these families were traditional and conservative and so was the mother of Shudha. Shudha imbibed the best of both.

The story of Shudha Mazumdar is not just the story of an individual but it is also the story of a movement that brought about change in the traditional pattern of Indian society. It is the story of struggle, conflict, indecision, failure and the final victory.

Shudha, married at the age of thirteen, married first and learnt of love next. Though her life style was traditional, she was never a solitary soul. She was a part and parcel of the community around her and deeply involved in their joys and sorrows. She was an ardent social worker keenly interested in the life of rural women, and she served as the Indian delegate to the International Labour Organisation.

Shudha is a lady with deep religious sentiment. Mystic experiences are a part and parcel of her memoirs.

**The Memoirs** makes delightful reading with its down-to-earth realism on the one hand and the elusive yet convincing otherworldliness on the other and Shudha expressing herself with ease and confidence throughout.

A PATTERN OF LIFE has woven beautifully into the web of new national consciousness with its perfume of jasmine garlands, the tinklings of silver anklets and a love for Marie Corelli!

—C. N. Mangala.

**AN INTRODUCTION TO THE PHONETICS AND STRUCTURE OF ENGLISH.** By S. Velayudhan and K. P. Mohanan. Published by Somaiya Publications Private Ltd. Bombay. Pages: VIII + 134. Price: Rs. 9/-.

HERE is an easily accessible and fairly comprehensive TEXT BOOK written by Indians relating to phonetics and the structure of English. I would unhesitatingly recommend it for use in colleges where "Sounds" and "Structure" are taught as part of Optional English at the first degree level.

The authors have offered an explanation for bringing out this book. They are right in saying that none of the text books now in use in India to teach these subjects is comprehensive in terms of the syllabus prescribed. Though the teachers ought to consult a number of good books on the subject in order to know and explain things, a primary text book would certainly be handy. It is definitely so as far as the students are concerned.

The first 52 pages of the book under review are devoted to Phonetics. The first chapter is by way of introduction. The other three chapters in this section deal respectively with Phonetics, Phonology and stress and intonation. The chapter on Phonetics is fairly exhaustive. I only wish the figures were better done. The indicative marks in figure 4 (four) are much too small. Good photographs for lips rounded and lips unrounded would have served the purpose more tidily. The exercises

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at the end of each chapter could be improved. Many of our students and some of the teachers too find it hard to get adequate passages for transcription. At the end of the fourth chapter the authors could have introduced a few good passages in phonetic script and could have given some worked out passages to indicate the various aspects of stress and pronunciation. I know that tapes and records are the best; but institutions which cannot afford heavy investment would look for satisfactory substitutes.

Chapters 5 to 10 are devoted to a study of the structure of English. While the fifth chapter relates to the study of words, Morphology, the other chapters deal with the study of sentences. It is fairly exhaustive for a first degree level text book. I only wish the exercises had been more fully devised.

Chapter 11 is concerned with approaches to the study of Grammar. We have here not only an analysis of descriptive, and prescriptive approaches, but also a discussion on the notions of grammaticality and acceptability.

There are also three appendices on cohesive devices, punctuation and glossary of usage. The entire book is satisfactorily done and is an eminently useful text book for Optional English students at the first degree level.

—N. Nanjunda Sastry.

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**NOTE**

**In the issue of "Bhavan's Journal" dated July 1, 1979, in the review of the book "Hindu Conception of the Deity," 'Madhva' was wrongly spelt as 'Madhava' on page 95. The error is regretted.**

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**By**

**K. Chandrasekharan**

**Price Rs. 15.00**

**This book contains the following nine lectures delivered by the author as the Tagore Professor of Humanities of the Madras University, between the years 1968 and 1969.**

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